Interview with Gary L. Matthews

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR GARY L. MATTHEWS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: This is an interview with Ambassador Gary L. Matthews and is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. First can you tell me when and where you were born, and something about your family?

MATTHEWS: I was born in Springfield, Missouri in 1938, which then as now is the queen city of the Ozarks even though it is in Missouri, not in Arkansas. At one time it also qualified as the milking shorthorn capital of the world. I believe, I'm told in more recent years they've moved away from the cow business and more into light manufacturing.

Q: What was your father doing?

MATTHEWS: My father is still alive, a hearty 80 some years old, was an accountant, a bookkeeper, and now retired.

Q: And your mother?

MATTHEWS: My mother, now deceased, she was first and foremost a wonderful wife and mother. She was also an excellent legal secretary, a profession she practiced off and on.

Q: We were talking beforehand about the background, it really is a small town in the Midwest. Where did you go to school?

MATTHEWS: Although I was born in the great metropolis of Springfield, Missouri which might have had 60-some thousand back then maybe, my growing up was in a very small Missouri town quite some miles from there, a town of 800, 900, 1200, which were good places, I must say. I found my way out into the wider world, if you will, mostly via the United States Army which I entered on my 17th birthday.

Q: This would be in?

MATTHEWS: Early January, '55, and I enlisted specifically to be assigned to the 10th infantry division in Germany.

Q: This is the 10th mountain division in which Senator Dole prominently served in, and it had quite a record in Italy.

MATTHEWS: In '55 it was sent over to replace the 1st infantry division, the Big Red One, which was then in Germany as part of the occupation Army.

Just to digress a bit, jumping ahead to 1992, our son Andy who decided pretty much on his own to enter the Army, went down and got himself assigned to 10th Mountain Division, now headquartered at Fort Drum, New York, and had the distinction of being deployed to Somalia and to Haiti in the same year. He has completed his three years and four months, but we served in the same division by total coincidence.

Q: You were in Germany?

MATTHEWS: I was in Germany, that's correct.

Q: What was your impression there at that time? We're talking about 10 years after the war.

MATTHEWS: Reflecting back on it, because my first Foreign Service posting happened to be Bonn, Germany. That was in 1962 so I've had occasion to reflect back on the antecedents, if you will, which would be my Army years. In mid-1955 I was stationed in Aschaffenburg, which is not too far away from Frankfurt, and the bombing damage from World War II was still very much all about. In the Central Bahnhof, the train station, the roof was still missing, and officially the formal occupation of Germany was still in force. I believe it ended in the latter half of 1955. I recall we still used military scrip for PX and other...

Q: It's a form of controlled currency.

MATTHEWS: ...controlled currency which I didn't see again until about 20 years later in Vietnam while serving there. I was struck by the extent to which Germany then looked not that much different than it probably did in the immediate aftermath of the war. It was striking to see when I returned in 1962 to take up my first posting in Bonn, Germany, how much of that had already disappeared, and so much had been achieved in the period between early 1958 when I left Germany and finished my hitch in the Army, and when I went back in the summer of 1962 in the Foreign Service out there.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relations between the Army and the Germans at that time?

MATTHEWS: It seemed very congenial to me. Young people all of course were out there visiting the Gaithaus establishments, and finding companionship here and there, dancing and the like.

Q: I was two years before you at Luneburg in Darmstadt, it was very nice duty.

MATTHEWS: But just in general I recall older Germans who obviously served and suffered probably during the war, always being very friendly. I remember being struck so favorably by that.

Q: Did you get any feel about there was such a thing as a Foreign Service?

MATTHEWS: Not really. People have asked me over the years, what got you interested in the Foreign Service? I think we're all asked this at some point. About all I can do is reach back and say, well, when I was a young fellow in the Army in Germany that's what got me interested in something on the international side.

Q: How long did you serve in the Army?

MATTHEWS: I had three full years.

Q: So you're out in '58.

MATTHEWS: I got out in early '58.

Q: And where did you go? What did you do?

MATTHEWS: I came back to Springfield, Missouri. That's where I had been born and my parents were then living there. They had moved back there, so they were back in the big city, and I immediately enrolled at and began studies as a history major at Drury College, a small liberal arts college in Springfield, Missouri. I should back up and say prior to going into the Army, I had had one year at the University of Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy, in Rolla, Missouri with aspirations to become a great electrical engineer. Unfortunately, mathematics, physics, mechanical drawing, and a number of other subjects related to engineering were totally beyond my ken. So pondering that during the course of my Army years, I became a history major.

Q: You were on the GI Bill, weren't you?

MATTHEWS: I was on the GI Bill. It was somewhere, I believe, around $110 a month which coupled with a little bit of income from jobs here and there, did very well by me.

Q: Did you take four years at Drury?

MATTHEWS: I speeded up, I took course overloads during the regular semesters, and I went to summer school, and I actually got my degree in 1960.

Q: In history?

MATTHEWS: In history.

Q: Any particular area of history?

MATTHEWS: I took them all. Of my 120 hours of course work for graduation, 60 were in history. They let me sort of go at it.

Q: So you're out in 1960, whither?

MATTHEWS: I was pondering my options, although we didn't say things like that at the time, and decided to go on to graduate school and was accepted and was all set to go to George Washington University here in Washington, and then I got an offer to be a teaching assistant fellow in a graduate program to get my Master's in political science at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Went to visit the campus, liked it, and decided, by golly, that's where I would go.

Q: How long were you there?

MATTHEWS: I was there for one year, got my Master's in political science in the summer of '61. I had taken the Foreign Service exam in the fall of '60, I suppose, and to my

astonishment got a letter just as I was preparing, by the way, to go back into the US Army with my then regular Army commission. It took some fancy footwork and more to...

Q: Had you taken ROTC?

MATTHEWS: No, I had applied for and received a direct Army commission. I was just preparing to depart for Fort Benning for the basic officers' course when the Foreign Service appointment arrived.

Q: What caused you to take the Foreign Service exam?

MATTHEWS: I recollect that when I was at Drury College one of my professors had commended the Foreign Service as a career possibility in terms of things that might be interesting to do. As for any great body of knowledge about the Foreign Service, I don't think I ever did. I don't think I really knew much of anything about what it was all about.

Q: You took the written exam, passed it, did you take the oral exam?

MATTHEWS: I took the oral. I recall driving from Oklahoma back to St. Louis, Missouri where the panel of three officers coming out of Washington had gone to conduct the orals. I believe the reason I did that rather than going to some other location, perhaps nearer to Oklahoma was that way I could visit my folks in Springfield. So, as you know, from the Foreign Service in those days, the three Foreign Service officers sent off to conduct these oral exams of us...

Q: Do you recall any of the things they were asking you about?

MATTHEWS: I was doing my Master's thesis on the German reunification issue. I believe I really lucked out in that at least two of the three panelists were old German hands, probably Kreis officers in their day.

Q: Kreis officers shortly after World War II, about '48 or so I think, they had officers that were interim, Kreis being equivalent to a county officers and they sort of substituted for the American military as a transition for the Germans to take over.

MATTHEWS: That's right. In fact I was struck very much when I got to Embassy Bonn for my first Foreign Service posting in 1962, virtually every Foreign Service officer in the political section had been a Kreis officer after the war. It was a remarkable thing.

Q: Back to the exam.

MATTHEWS: They asked a lot of questions about Germany, and I was pretty topped off at that point, or thought I was anyway. I remember we talked mostly about Germany, Europe and the like. Then they began to ask questions about economics, and to my horror toward the end of this quite lengthy session, two or three hours as I recall, they turned to geography, specifically US geography. And I believe the final question asked of me was whether I knew in which state the Grand Canyon was located. I shan't forget that I answered, Colorado. They thanked me very much, and I went out to sit pondering the ignominiousness they no doubt viewed this as, and was called back in and told that I had passed, and was congratulated with the injunction that I should definitely straightaway proceed to bone up quite a bit on economics and geography.

Q: I was given that on economics very definitely which I didn't need to be told. I had gotten a D minus in my first year of economics. So you came into the Foreign Service in '62.

MATTHEWS: In September '61.

Q: Could you characterize, describe a bit about the people who were in your Foreign Service class, and what they thought they were going to do in their place in the world. This is an interesting time because this is the height of the Kennedy time.

MATTHEWS: Oh, absolutely. In fact, here I was basically a mid-westerner who'd never seen the big lights, really had never been on the east coast except the troop train that took me to catch the troop ship from New York to go to Germany back in early '55. It was a very exciting time. My colleagues were almost all men. There were maybe two women in the class. We all had flat tops, crew cuts...the guys, that is. Almost all the men had military service, there were some exceptions but they were the exceptions by far. My Foreign Service classmates were a good lot. One of them is around town still, Peter Tarnoff, the present Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Most have now retired. There are a couple still in the Service, Lannon Walker is still in the Service and is serving as an ambassador again in Africa, and a few others around but we're mostly retired out by now.

Q: You came in in September of '61, and in January of '61 President Kennedy in his inauguration asked, not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. There seemed to be a spirit of volunteerism and activism, not only in the United States but abroad. Was that part of the ethos of your group?

MATTHEWS: Oh, very much, including by the way, Kennedy's big emphasis on Africa, Africa being the next great challenge, the place to go, and a number of us from my Foreign Service class really pushed to go to Africa in their first posting, including myself I might add. And I remember being somewhat...well, I don't want to say disappointed, but feeling a little bit left out that instead of being sent to Lagos, Nigeria where I really wanted to go, I was sent back to Bonn, Germany.

Q: How did you find the entry level course as far as getting you ready for the Foreign Service?

MATTHEWS: I think for my purposes, and by extension my colleagues...perhaps they came with more of an awareness about what the Foreign Service was, and what we were supposed do in it, but I thought it gave me a darn good grounding. It was sort of a basic, this is what a Foreign Service reporting cable is, this is what a dispatch is, and here's

how organizational issues, a few visits around the area here in those days. We went out to Beltsville to visit the experimental turkey farm, they took us up to New York where we stayed at the Seamen's Church Institute, you probably recall, in a tough neighborhood as I recall. I thought it was all pretty darn good stuff. That was followed, as soon as the A-100 was over, by the consular course which one of the great old Foreign Service officers, Harvey Cash, taught. He was one of the great consular officers, and taught us well.

Q: So your first assignment was to Bonn.

MATTHEWS: ...via I might add, because of the timing coming in in September, via a short stint in the Bureau of European Affairs which had at that time an office called BNA, which essentially was all the Caribbean dependencies of European nations. I was actually a desk officer for Suriname, and all manner of little places. So I thought, this Foreign Service stuff is pretty good. It's really true that you deal with relations with countries. I actually was able to shepherd a little treaty through, something about landing rights on some island down there. So I wound up spending about two months, maybe even three months, that was my first exposure to the bureaucracy.

You asked about President Kennedy. I well recall he would come over and hold his press conferences in the conference room in the State Department, and we knew when that would be. We would go down to the basement and the convertible would drive in, the Secret Service guys would jump out, and Kennedy would come over, shake our hand. There weren't that many of us that would go down actually, and then you could go and hear him hold forth in the press conference if you wanted. So I thought, hey, this Foreign Service life isn't bad. You hobnob with the President...beats Missouri.

Q: You were in Bonn from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From July 1962 to July of 1964.

Q: Can you describe who was the ambassador, your impression of the ambassador? And of the embassy, and how it worked, and what you were doing?

MATTHEWS: The embassy was quite a large operation. The political section, by present day standards, was enormous, perhaps 25-30 Foreign Service officers, and all manner of other people. Other sections were comparably large. The administrative support operation was quite significant, and as today because of the administrative support it provided to other posts in Germany. The ambassador when I arrived was Ambassador Dowling, Red Dowling, a very distinguished gentleman. He wasn't there too long after I arrived but long enough that I was invited to join him on one of the trips to Berlin. That was back when the American ambassador to Germany had his own train, not a bad perk to have. I recall going up on the Ambassador's train to Berlin, and the East German border guards looking meanly through the train windows as we held up our glass, so to speak. Then he finished his tour and was replaced by Ambassador George C. McGhee who had already served prominently as an Assistant Secretary and in other high positions in Washington, and whom I have seen even recently. He's aged very well. So Ambassador McGhee was the ambassador for the remainder of my tour there, and I acted as a substitute back-up ambassador's aide at some point during my tour there. That was when we had this program of rotating new Foreign Service officers on their first posting abroad among the various sections. So I did a stint in consular, economic-commercial, administrative and political, which I've always thought was simply great. In fact it gave me much more of a grounding in all of those functions, and I could see that each was important in its own right, you didn't immediately become a pointy-headed political officer by any means. By just utter luck of the draw, there was a big chiefs of mission conference which Ambassador McGhee hosted in 1963, and as you can imagine with illustrious ones coming in from all over Europe, both career ambassadors and some very prominent politically appointed ambassadors, it was a major logistics operation for those of us assigned to Embassy Bonn, and I was made control officer, among others, for one of the chiefs of mission attending from Romania. We hit it off, and he asked me what my thoughts were about

what I might do after Bonn. Well, I had always had an interest in Eastern Europe. So he subsequently mentioned this to Personnel in Washington, and that eventually in a very strange way, led to my first posting to Eastern Europe.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MATTHEWS: It was William Crawford.

Q: While you were in Germany, how did Ambassador McGhee from whatever perspective you had, work with the Germans at that time? Had we moved away from the pro-consul period do you think?

MATTHEWS: I think we had. There were some difficult issues, the multilateral nuclear force issue, and other prominent policy initiatives and problems. But I do recall that Ambassador McGhee certainly had very direct access to Chancellor Adenauer, and all the other members of the government there. I recall, for example, when I was serving my stint in the economic section once taking something over to the Vice Chancellor's office, who was Erhard, there was no security, no nothing, walked in and said I was from the American embassy. Here's this package of whatever it was that I was handing over. Those were simpler times. I always had the sense that Ambassador McGhee was very much in the loop between what Washington wanted, and was doing, and what the German government wanted and was doing. He really was used in the classic sense as the nexus in terms of the diplomatic dialogue between the two countries, and all the more in view of the security issues. We had at that time a number of incidents and near crises with the Soviets over access to Berlin, our use of the land and air corridors. And during my time in the political section I worked on a number of those problems, and specifically we had an eastern affairs unit in the political section in Bonn which was very active and among other things there was a so-called Bonn group of fairly senior officers from the other NATO embassies and we did a lot of things all the time on a continuing basis related to the Soviet threat, if you will, and activities.

Q: Can you describe the attitude towards the Soviet threat was at that time.?

MATTHEWS: It was perceived to be very, very direct. This, of course, is not too long after the erection of the Berlin wall, and there were indeed nasty incidents quite regularly. Refusal by the East German border guards, sometimes with Soviet officers observing, refusal to let convoys pass in the manner in which they thought they should be able to pass, restrictions in the air corridors height—altitude type restriction, buzzing of our aircraft and things like that. So there was a lot going on in that vein, and that was the period when the threat was perceived as being quite acute.

Q: Obviously you were sort of at the bottom of the food chain...

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes, very much, let there be no mistake here.

Q: But did you, as pressure was being heated up on Berlin particularly...I've interviewed some people who were in Berlin around the time, and there was concern there among them that they hoped we all were, as a national policy, we weren't going to give way on Berlin in some way. Did you sense any of this?

MATTHEWS: No, in fact I never had any sense that...I was never privy to any discussions that might have taken place. Martin Hillenbrand was the Minister Counselor, the DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission, a very fine man of course, who went back subsequently to be the ambassador to Bonn. Coburn Kidd was the political counselor...they were Foreign Service legends already, and extremely able, and wide, broad thinkers.

Q: As the sort of new kid on the block, often you can catch moods more than you do when you're more experienced and your own attitudes take over. What were you catching from people dealing with the heart of our relationship with Germany at that time about whither Germany? We're really talking about West Germany at this time. Was there concern that it might revert to its old ways? Or was it a feeling it was really a new Germany?

MATTHEWS: No, no. I never ran into anything except the expectation that Germany had passed through the veil, and was very much a solid partner within the western alliance. That was, of course, during the heyday, the height of the Hallstein Doctrine which required...

Q: You might explain.

Matthew: I'll explain briefly, and then correct me please if my memory of it is...but the doctrine provided that any government establishing relations with the so-called German Democratic Republic, East Germany, would be sanctioned by having its relations either broken off with, or negatively affected by not just the Federal Republic of Germany, but US and other allies.

Q: I think Germany would not have relations.

MATTHEWS: Germany would not have relations.

Q: And the United States would look with disfavor. Hallstein was the foreign minister at the time, and this is the doctrine that went on until the "'70s, wasn't it?

MATTHEWS: I think officially it was still on the books up through the...I'm trying to think when the Berlin Quadripartite Agreement and all of that got ginned up. It was certainly through the late "'60s.

Q: Then you left Bonn in '64. Sometimes as one of the traumatic things, how did the assassination of President Kennedy hit the...

MATTHEWS: It was just devastating. It was totally devastating, and all the more so because President Kennedy had had his wonderful, and highly successful visit to Germany shortly before that.

Q: This is when he said “Ich bin ein Berliner.”

MATTHEWS: That's right. So all of us, and particularly a junior officer like myself, had worked very hard on his visit when he was in Bonn, of course, his visit is better known for Ich bin ein Berliner right there in Berlin, but it was a tremendous turnout, and a wonderful visit in Bonn itself. But when the assassination occurred, it was just totally devastating. And as I recall, any activity worthy of the name, came to a complete halt in the embassy, and in the rather large American community. I lived in the official housing enclave, the so-called Golden Ghetto at that time, the main street of which then was named Frankengraben, and not too long after the assassination that was renamed Kennedy Avenue, which it has remained today.

Q: In '64 where were you assigned?

MATTHEWS: I'm sure as many junior Foreign Service officers experience, I was sitting and fretting my way as to what my next assignment would be while I was still in Bonn, and it became early spring, mid-spring, late spring and in those days you didn't pick up the phone, you felt you should wait for the word, and to not only my astonishment, but that of many others because no one really knew what the heck the thing was—I received a very brief cable from the State Department assigning me to the newly established Operations Center of the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State. I well recall asking some of the very experienced illustrious senior Foreign Service officers what this was. And they said, we're not really sure. Of course the reason being it had been set up quite recently in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination. You had a sort of a National Military Command Center operation in the State Department. I clattered back, took up my duties there, and was one of the first group.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From July of '64 through July or August of 1965, it was a one year assignment in those days, and in fact it dovetailed with my selection for and assignment to Polish language training which was in lieu of going to Romania because some chap there had extended.

Q: Can you talk about the Operations Center when you arrived? How it was set up at that time.

MATTHEWS: It was much more a seat-of-the-pants operation...you were involved in everything. You didn't have all of the fancy computers and machines we have now. You basically relied on the telephone. We had some sort of huge ten foot high heavy classified phone thing which as I recall almost never worked, the KY something, very old technology by present day standards. But the great thing about the Operations Center in those days was you had all kinds of contacts with the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and the other principals of the Department because they were always around and you would actually take little briefs to them. I recall going up on the 8th floor in evenings and approaching Secretary Rusk, saying, Sir, the results of the latest bombing raids against targets in North Vietnam...President Johnson would periodically call the Operations Center for news about things happening, mostly in Vietnam. So you had to be on your toes lest the President be on the other end of the wire. It wasn't that large...the staff was smaller, the senior watch officer, associate watch officer which I started out as, and then there was an assistant, usually a civil service employee assigned to the Department. Then the other half of the operation was the editor's shop, which prepared the summaries for the Secretary of State's morning reading, and that was an editor and an associate editor. And after about six months on the watch they asked me if I would be interested in becoming an editor. I said yes, so I switched over and did that.

Q: Were there any particular crises during that time where you were involved.

MATTHEWS: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Can you talk about them, and your impression of what was happening?

MATTHEWS: The biggest, no doubt the confusing crisis then, and I think to the present day, was the Tonkin Gulf incident. Two of our naval vessels, as I recall, one being the Turner Joy, reportedly came under attack by torpedo boats in Vietnam, and there ensued reaction—the Tonkin Gulf resolution in the US Congress, and the congressional mandate that President Johnson used to prosecute the war and ratchet up the level of our involvement. I recall that Vietnam very much dominated the breaking news nature of the shifts. Although there were some other significant things that happened at the time, Khrushchev's removal in Moscow took place at that time, when he was replaced by a collective leadership, a ruling triumvirate.

Q: The Chinese had a hydrogen bomb that went off.

MATTHEWS: It was an active period and since the Operations Center had not been established that long, the principals really did interact with it personally all the time.

Q: For the historical record, during this period let's say something would happen, was it a matter of keeping track of what happened and calling somebody you felt would be responsible in the correct bureau to pass the ball on, or would you sort of take care of things. How did it work?

MATTHEWS: We had very comprehensive alert lists from each bureau which they were required, as I recall, to submit on at least a weekly basis, perhaps even more often, particularly on weekends. So we knew whom to call from say, the FE Bureau, the Far East Bureau, now East Asia and Pacific affairs, or the European Bureau, whatever it might be. Then I think we had some degree of discretion on whether we called the Secretary of State, or the Under Secretary as he was then called, the number two, now Deputy Secretary. I recall we did that fairly often. The other angle of course was, if the White House, particularly the President called, we most certainly let the Secretary of State or...I

think Ben Read was Executive Secretary at the time. I recall we would often use him as our conduit to let the Secretary of State know about something. It was always very exciting, and we had a lot of fun. We weren't overburdened by manuals on procedures on how to do things. We were sort of creating this by doing. I well recall 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. races in corridors using those battery powered carts the messengers would use when things were quiet, though it wasn't that we abandoned our posts. That was '64-'65, and a number of those of us who would get off around midnight would usually head over to a watering hole, there were a number of bars and restaurants on Pennsylvania Avenue near the Department.

Q: I take it you weren't married?

MATTHEWS: No, no. This was an interesting bachelorhood period in my life. We worked rotating shifts—we had like two 4:00 in the afternoon to midnight, followed by two midnight to 9:00 in the morning, followed by two days. So your system was always in flux.

Q: What was the relation with this Operations Center which was designed to sort of duplicate that of the military, except you might say from the foreign relations point of view. What was the relationship with the Pentagon?

MATTHEWS: We were working that out during that period, and it worked out quite well. I believe just as I arrived, we had the first MilRep, military representative, from the National Military Command Center, an NMCC assigned officer, usually an 0-6 colonel, or perhaps an 0-5 lieutenant colonel. At least one of them was on each shift as I recall, and they acted as the routine liaison back and forth with the Pentagon's NMCC. Somewhat later, I believe just after I left my assignment in the Operations Center, correspondingly the State Department assigned a Foreign Service officer to be physically present in the NMCC. So you had the dual connection. That lasted for some years and then eventually ceased, as did having, I believe, the military representative present. It was very, very necessary because among other things the MilRep was very important in doing the maps of air

strikes and other military operations, particularly concerning Vietnam, which we included in the Secretary's morning and evening summaries, and also he was very important when it came to getting more military information, say on naval operations, or whatever it might be. My sense is that what we were sort of doing on a daily-nightly basis while we were actually doing it, was eventually codified, if you want to put it that way, made into procedures which incoming new people could use to get themselves up to snuff.

Q: When you moved to editing, what were the things that were necessary to bring the Secretary and his immediate subordinates up to date on?

MATTHEWS: Our main purpose was to cut down substantially on the volume of all of the traffic coming in. Even then it was no comparison to now, the volume of incoming high precedence messages and personal communications from ambassadors was far greater than any Secretary of State or Under Secretary could ever have digested. So our first task was to boil this down so that we never missed any of the essentials, but we didn't throw too much chafe into the operation either. Most times we would draw on code word messages, personal messages from ambassadors, for Secretary of State, Eyes Only, from ambassador blah-blah, and then we would include in that some topical things which were always backed up by much more voluminous material if a principal wished to read further, or have it orally briefed to him. It all worked pretty well. We strived to keep it very concise, though not as concise as the President's evening reading which I later worked on when I was working for the Deputy Secretary of State. And we also interacted closely with the Intelligence and Research Bureau people.

Q: Both looking at it at the time, and then with some reflection later on, this of course is the time when we were just getting involved in Vietnam, and Secretary Rusk was considered by many to be really focused on the Far East, or Asia, more than Europe. What was going to the Secretary for his immediate attention, and his principals? Was it pretty heavily on Vietnam, or was it pretty much across the board?

MATTHEWS: I believe it was pretty much across the board. The only thing, and I believe I'm right on this because of the time difference, often times his morning summaries—that is, what we were preparing during the night, while he and the other principals were asleep—would reflect military developments in Vietnam that had taken place during the day because of the 24-hour time difference. There was definitely a lot, especially on NATO, on the Soviet Union. It was a pretty good operation.

Q: You finished that year in '65, and then where did you go?

MATTHEWS: Then I went into full-time Polish language training, a nine or ten month course with two other people.

Q: You were in the garage.

MATTHEWS: We had just moved from the garage. I had my German and some of the other initial Foreign Service Institute training in the garage where we literally were in a garage, as I'm sure you recall, especially in winter when you could hear the chains on the tires clicking over our heads. It was widely believed, as you recall, that the exhaust fumes from cars were slowly asphyxiating us, but we were, thankfully for the Polish, we were already in the then new Foreign Service Institute in Rosslyn, up the hill in the large tall building. And myself and two others sat in a small room for nine or ten months, and had Polish injected into us, painfully at times.

Q: What were you getting from your instruction? I say this because I know I got...I had taken Serbian some years before, and we had some people who were ardent Serbs...I took it with Larry Eagleburger, and David Anderson, and a few others, and we got really a very good insight into the nationalistic Serb mentality, which might not have been good for a world view of Yugoslavia, but certainly something which we later could draw on by understanding what made the Serbs tick. It annoyed the hell out of us at the time. How about with the Poles?

MATTHEWS: Absolute same. We had this marvelous person, Krystyna Malinowika, who was the head Polish teacher. As during your time, there was a linguist who appeared very infrequently. I remember we used to grumble, what is this person really getting to do here, we never see him. Of course, he was quite busy trying to keep it all going.

Q: Probably the same person, who was afraid to deal with these Slavs.

MATTHEWS: Krystyna and the several other Polish nationals were born in Poland, but most of them by then were American citizens, not all, and it was just invaluable. You're right, they visited strong opinions on us, and we didn't always appreciate it at the time. They gave us an appreciation for what the Polish eagle is all about, their view of Russians, Germans and anyone else, and certainly an endearing appreciation for the strength and dynamics of their lives in the United States, how wonderfully close Polish-Americans really are. So they worked us hard and I was very fortunate, although I don't consider myself a great linguist. I have, thank goodness, an affinity for Slavic languages which is woefully missing when it comes to Romance languages. So not only did my Polish turn out to be pretty good, but later that helped me immensely when I took up a more systematic study of Russian, and eventually served there. It was well taught and although we worked very hard, we also had a lot of fun. Krystyna made sure we were well indoctrinated about Polish delicacies, and goodness knows that the Poles consider without question that they make the best vodka in the world, Wyborawa, and the one with the buffalo grass in it, Zubrowka. We, needless to say, sampled these liberally so we would know what to do when we got to Poland. Good experience.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point and I'll put at the end of this tape where we're going to pick up next time. So we're really in 1966 and you'll be going off to Poland and we'll talk about that the next time around.

—

Q: Today is the 22nd of August 1996. Gary, so we're off to Poland. How did you get there, and then tell me a bit about the political situation as you saw it when you initially arrived in Poland in 1966.

MATTHEWS: I got there just shortly before Memorial Day, the end of May in '66, and I had departed these shores, the United States, on one of the US line ships which we still had at the time, the old Constitution, I believe. Took the ship to Genoa, got off there and then took a train up to Wolfsburg, Germany where I had ordered a Volkswagen Beetle, a VW bug, while I was still in Washington. And indeed it was waiting for me right there at the factory, and drove from there to Bonn to visit old friends from my time when I was stationed there, and after a few days proceeded to drive to my new assignment in Warsaw, Poland, through Czechoslovakia.

Q: Have any problems going across, in '66 it was still high cold war.

MATTHEWS: It was high cold war, and there were closed travel areas. That is to say restricted roads, and they had imposed, and we in the US had imposed restrictions on their diplomatic personnel, so that was still very much the way it was there. I recall the most straight, direct road...after one left Nuremberg and went to the Czech frontier, that the closest road from there on into Warsaw, Poland was closed, and you had to take somewhat of a detour. So, needless to say, that was my first experience other than traveling through East Germany back in the old days of actually driving in a communist land with controls and checkpoints. I recall that I made the journey with no particular difficulties in pretty good time as I recall.

Q: What was the political situation in Poland in 1966 as seen by you, and by the embassy?

MATTHEWS: Well, it was the height, as you noted a moment ago, I think you would have to say the height of the cold war in many ways. It was an adversarial time in the sense that a lot of US policies around the world were openly criticized by the Polish government,

and soon after I arrived at the embassy and took up my duties in the consular section as a visa officer, periodically demonstrations, government sponsored and sanctioned obviously, groups of several hundred people would present themselves in front of the US embassy in Warsaw and rocks would be thrown at our very nice, huge plate glass windows would be broken into smithereens, and in due course the Polish government would pay, first putting in temporary Polish glass which was of somewhat less quality than the Belgian glass which was originally there, and in due course long after that the replacement panes of Belgian glass would arrive and be installed. This experience repeated itself at least three times that I can recall while I was stationed in Warsaw, demonstrations against the US government for various and sundry things.

Q: In the first place, you were in Poland from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From the end of May '66 through July of 1968.

Q: Talk a little about the embassy, the ambassador, and how he ran the place. And also about your impression of the Polish specialists, like yourself, who were there.

MATTHEWS: I have very, very fond memories of Poland. The embassy, the Poles whom I got to know, and the country in general, just a wonderful land and to this very day I get a glow when I think about Poland and would like to go back for a visit one of these days again. The embassy was an extremely well run embassy. The physical plant was relatively new, nicely maintained, very functional. John Gronouski of whom I spoke at the end of our last session, had been the Postmaster General of the United States, appointed by President Kennedy, had been named to go to Poland as ambassador. A Polish-American obviously as you might gather by the name, a wonderful, sort of garrulous interesting guy who was a lot of fun to be around. He was a good leader in a great mix of warm personality and questioning what we should really be about. It always amused us, John Gronouski himself would chuckle about it, that one of the things that he was not adept at was speaking Polish despite the name. The Polish language with its intricacies proved to

be a bit much for him. But that certainly did not impede his success there. The embassy was well staffed. We had a very competent DCM, and section chiefs included some people who had served previously in Poland. And in general, at that point mid-'"60s, I was impressed by the core of East European, and in this case specifically Polish hands who did know a lot about the country, and there was very good language capability I might add on the part of the embassy staff, including our military attach#s. A number of them were of Polish origin and spoke the language very, very well. Many of them got chucked out periodically, that was also an aspect of those difficult times. There were forever being retaliatory expulsions.

Q: Were you doing consular work the whole time you were there?

MATTHEWS: I was in the visa section of the consular section in Warsaw, and at that time the program for new officers coming in, junior officers obviously, was for them to spend one year in the consular section, and then usually go on to a billet in the political, economic or cultural section. That pattern had worked very, very well over a number of years. In my case, because of an opening at the consulate in Poznan, in western Poland, I was asked if I would like to go there as the deputy principal officer. I had just gotten married in February of '67, my fianc# had come over from the States, and we had been married. So, we thought that wouldn't be a bad thing to do. I think it was June or July of '67 we moved to Poznan, so I spent my second year in Poland there.

Q: Let's talk about the time in Warsaw. Could you describe the visa work a bit?

MATTHEWS: It was certainly varied. I did mostly immigrant visa applications, although I also filled in on the non-immigrant visas, visitor's visas primarily. Then, as now, a significant concern on the part of non-immigrant visa officers was whether the person's bona fides as a non-immigrant were genuine because there was a well established pattern, and had been for many years, that people applying for visitor's visas to go visit

their cousin in Hamtramck, or Chicago or wherever it might be, would start working the day after they got to the US

Q: Or get married.

MATTHEWS: One could understand that. After all that was the opportunity, and these were marvelously industrious people who became successful. Of course, you had to be sponsored for a visitor's visa. Often we would ask that a bond be posted. But my memory is that that never deterred those who wished to apply for an adjustment of status, and we got those quite regularly. The immigrant visa issuance at the time was constrained considerably by the policies of the Polish government which essentially was very negative, except toward older people, perhaps a close relative. But essentially they were more often than not refused a passport...we would process someone for an immigrant visa, and that they would then be turned down when they went to the office of visa administration of the Polish government to obtain their exit documentation. I believe it was toward the end of my time there that the embassy changed its policy to, in effect, ask that someone first get the exit documentation, or at least some piece of paper that indicated that it would be forthcoming before we went to the considerable effort to process them for the immigrant visa. But we had a steady procession of people, many of whom had come up laboriously and with some difficulty from southern Poland, south of Krakow as I recall was a very prominent area where people would come to apply for visas to go visit their relatives in the US At that time embassy Warsaw was the only post in Poland of two where we issued immigrant visas. In Poznan when I got there, we did issue non-immigrant visitor's visas, but all of the immigrant visa processing was centered at the embassy in Warsaw.

Q: Were there any problems that the consular section, and officers of the consular section, would be called on to deal with visitors to Poland? I was thinking particularly of Polish-Americans coming back, and maybe shooting their mouths off a little too much.

MATTHEWS: I don't recall any problems in that regard. We had a citizenship section for issuance of passports, and taking care of people who perhaps ran out of money, or the usual mix of consular problems. I don't recall that that was a big headache for the officer in that section. It may be at that time we didn't have quite the volume of people coming and going that developed in later years. One of the functions I had, by the way, when I was in Warsaw is that we handled at that time essentially the consular functions of the Federal Republic of Germany through the...I forget the name of the office. So at one point during my time in Warsaw, since I had that function, I went on official business to Bonn for consultations with the government there about how that whole thing was operating.

Q: What were you doing for them?

MATTHEWS: It was essentially run on a day-to-day basis as I recall by Polish employees who were hired by the German government in some capacity. And there was a chap there in a less than full diplomatic status who headed up a German office. But he could not exercise consular functions as such, so the American embassy...it was sort of like an interests section, not really, it was a version of that. That certainly added spice to my activities. Among the many reasons I recall my time there very fondly is it was full of diverse, and interesting duties. As I say, the embassy was very nicely managed. The ambassador was a great guy to be around, loved in the evening to go down to the embassy club and shoot bumper pool with the likes of me. As I mentioned, we had the problems periodically with the Polish government being extremely critical of US government policies, and convoking the ambassadors or others to receive protests, but it was generally a good hard working, but fun loving post which everyone enjoyed.

Q: I sort of got the impression that you had a dual thing in Poland. One, you had basically the Poles really liked the United States, as a Polish consul told me in the "'70s, he said, Chicago has more Poles than any other city than Warsaw. So there has always been a very close tie. But at the same time the Poles and East Germans on the security side seemed to be two of the most efficient and nastiest security services. And that's not only

in Poland, but anywhere else. How about the security side? On either the personal or the professional level.

MATTHEWS: I mentioned the problem we had on the physical security in the embassy with the mobs which would hurl rocks and break out the windows, rather on cue, not spontaneously. On the personnel security front, we were all very carefully enjoined to be very cautious about attempts by the UB, the security service, and as you mentioned they had a track record of having done a number of things over the years. I arrived as I mentioned in May of '66, and it was just a few years before that there had been a famous case, Scarbeck...

Q: That was about '61.

MATTHEWS: And, in fact, when I was stationed at the embassy in Bonn, which was a rotational assignment, one of my duties there was in the security section of our embassy, and I had occasion to read the file on that whole case. Q: You might mention what the Scarbeck case was.

MATTHEWS: He was a chap who had been assigned to our embassy in Warsaw and it was sort of the classic security service ploy of utilizing a young woman with whom he became quite friendly, and in due course there was a compromise approach, and he began supplying certain things. It was never completely clear to what extent he provided embassy materials. It started out with embassy phone books, and went on to some indeterminate point. But at any rate, he was eventually caught, brought back to the US, sentenced and served some time, as I recall. But there were certainly other instances, including during my time, including frequent shadowing, tailing by the security services of staff members of the American embassy, including myself from time to time, and goodness knows that extended in spades to the military attach#s. As I say, every now and then would get chucked out, either because of some incident that happened on its own, or

as retaliation for something that had been done by the US against a Polish diplomat or attach# here in the States.

Q: Was there the procedure of a couple of people from the embassy going out and doing field trips around Poland just to see different places?

MATTHEWS: We did a lot of travel. Although we had these closed areas, they weren't nearly as numerous or as onerous as was the case in the Soviet Union. I mean, you could visit most of Poland. Sometimes you had to take odd routes to get there, but embassy officers were almost constantly on the go throughout Poland. I participated in that travel, and usually we went in the company of someone else. Occasionally if it were awkward to do that, we would go on our own hook. I recall that at that time one of the quite unusual things that happened that got us around Poland perhaps even more than we would have cared, was in '66, early '67, the Social Security Administration of the US ordered up a huge survey of all Polish-Americans...of all recipients of Social Security checks, a large volume of which we sent to Poland every month, to verify records.

Q: They'd just been through the process when I was in Yugoslavia from about '66-'67.

MATTHEWS: We were crawling all over Poland all the time, with I might add, the full cooperation of the Polish government. It was in their distinct interest to have...

Q: Normally our people in Yugoslavia went with a member of the equivalent to the Social Security of Yugoslavia.

MATTHEWS: As did we, that's correct. I recall looking at records, and checking the people to see if they are still there. And as far as I recall, although it's a bit hazy, there were certainly no untoward discoveries as a result of that, and the Social Security Administration here was quite satisfied, and the checks continued.

Q: I think Congress had gotten disturbed because there was all this money going into the Iron Curtain, Czechoslovakia was another place. So they said a lot of this is probably going to fake people. They also did one in Greece, and Yugoslav was pretty straightforward. You had a little discrepancy, but very little except right around the Greek border where all of a sudden you began to pull up some false or dubious claims, and in Greece it was much worse.

MATTHEWS: You're absolutely right about their equivalent of whatever Social Security ministry providing someone, and I might add, a car and driver. We all had the same experience of being driven at extremely high speeds over these very narrow, winding Polish roads where horse carts and all manner of things would crop up. It took some degree of courage to go out.

Q: How did you find your reception at say local communist party headquarters, when you got outside of Warsaw, and around at both the official and maybe at the non-official levels. Was there a difference?

MATTHEWS: Definitely. My recollection is that we were always quite well received outside of the capital, and I might add when I got to Poznan the head of the Polish United Workers Party, the communist party, there was a man by the name of Jan Szydlak, who was sort of notoriously rude, and ordered his people to have nothing to do with us. But once we went out into our surrounding districts, we would be quite pleasantly received elsewhere in the consular district. That extended, as I recall, to the party types when we would make a call on them, as well as of course the city councils, provincial councils, people like that. We were generally warmly welcomed.

Q: You were in Poznan '67-'68.

MATTHEWS: That's right. I recall when I went there perhaps it was with the thought that I would even be there two years, which would be a normal tour there, plus the year I had

already had in Warsaw. Then I received a surprise assignment, quite welcome I might add, to Columbia University for a year of Soviet and East European studies. I was fairly recently newly married, we had no children, so actually we were very happy to contemplate going to New York City.

Q: In Poznan, what were your duties, and was there a difference as far as you viewed Poland from that perspective?

MATTHEWS: The duties were different in the sense that I did the visa issuance, although that was very, very small, minor compared to the all but visa mills that we had in the embassy in Warsaw. In Poznan we were constantly on the go, political reporting, reporting on economic conditions, attitudes, all manner of things like that, intelligence gathering if you will. We had quite a wide consular district. We dipped down to Wroclaw, the south part, the old Lower Silesia, Upper Silesia bordering with Czechoslovakia, and with East Germany. Then we went up to Szczecin and Gdansk, all those areas up north along the Baltic. So we were often on the go visiting those places, making calls, keeping eyes and ears open and reporting fairly extensively. When I say reporting, those were the days when communication was certainly primitive by present day standards, and anything we did on the classified basis was through use of the one-time pad, which I'm sure you recall. A very slow going, laborious way to encode your prose. I recall, I think this is the only time I ever had to do this in the Foreign Service, dutifully doing these 5-letter groups, using the matrix that we had, and then taking it down to the PTT, the Post Telephone-Telegraph office in Poznan, and sending it off.

Q: When you were up around Szczecin and Gdansk...I suppose later it developed into the Solidarity movement, were there labor problems that we were aware of, or not?

MATTHEWS: I'm not aware of any that came to our knowledge. I got to Gdansk just once, but at that time my recollection is that was still in the embassy's consular district, although

since we were relatively closer, especially once we got to Szczecin we were quite close, that we conducted official visits there. I recall going to the port.

Q: Were you seeing an agitated society at that point.

MATTHEWS: I suppose sullen would be more the word I would chose. Poles always had more color about them than I subsequently found among the oppressed Soviet peoples. But people tended to keep their heads down.

Q: What about the church? Both while you were in Warsaw and in Poznan. Were you making contact there? And what were you finding out?

MATTHEWS: The church was preeminent then as subsequently. It was a glorious time, but one of persecution for the church. Just as I arrived in Warsaw, the Polish church was beginning to observe the 1000th anniversary of the establishment of Christianity in Poland, 966 to 1966. The primate of Poland at the time, Cardinal Wyszynski, was personally going around Poland leading processions where they would carry the sacred icon, Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Black Madonna. And I had occasion to visit Czestochowa once and actually see the icon quite up close. The regime was harassing the church. In fact there were incidents both when I was in Warsaw when this was going on...there were incidents when the secret police, the UB, would harass people wanting to take part in these processions. That continued after I got to Poznan...that was towards the end, I suppose, of the celebrations. But I recall some incidents also down in Wroclaw, where people were harassed for wanting to express reverence.

Q: Were we under any inhibitions about talking to members of the church?

MATTHEWS: Oh, no, no. Quite the contrary. In fact, I recall, we would always seek to call on, or convey regards to the members of the church hierarchy, either a Bishop or parish priest.

Q: Would they talk about the problems of Poland?

MATTHEWS: My recollection is they would. It's a little hazy with me now. I know certainly we had people at the embassy who were talking with those in the establishment, at the diocesan levels, and would get pretty good information that way.

Q: Did you have a fair while you were in Poznan?

MATTHEWS: Indeed, we did. In fact I went once from Warsaw to the fair in Poznan. At that point the biggest industrial fair in all of Eastern Europe as I recall. There was the one in East Germany which was the Leipzig Fair. But I think Poznan took the honors in terms of being the big thing to do. It was obviously held during the year that I was stationed in Poznan, but one of those years...that was the year of the North Korean seizure of the ship Pueblo, and the North Korean government which had an embassy in Warsaw, put up an ugly exhibit, by any description, at their pavilion at the Poznan fair showing our captured, detained Navy crew. And we protested very vociferously, etc. I think at some point the North Koreans, after they made their point, took it inside their pavilion. There were both politics as well as a lot of business surrounding those fairs, especially it seems to me in the years before I got to Poland, the US government had mounted a fairly significant effort to put our best foot forward. There were still tales of the US exhibit that had a full bowling alley as part of it. Poles and Americans had a great time rolling the balls down the alleyway. It was the first such bowling alley that had ever been seen in Poznan, Poland that's for sure. Perhaps the last for all I know. We actually had old exhibit hands from USIA come over and plan and manage those exhibits for a period of some weeks.

Q: How were the Soviets received there, both at the fair, and then obviously there were a lot service supply troops in Poland.

MATTHEWS: You're right. They were there mostly to service their lines of communication, more often than not in support of the many, many troops they had in East Germany. The

Soviet consulate in Poznan was sort of this dark, forbidding perennially closed, literally closed and locked place. My recollection is that we often puzzled as to what in the world they did. They didn't do much of anything in the representational sense. I can't recall ever running into representatives of the Soviet consulate at functions. Certainly they did not invite us to parties, and we did not invite them. Those were those kinds of days. I can't recall ever seeing them out on what passed for the social circuit in Poznan. I think they gave us a courtesy copy of their Soviet Life magazine, the name of it in Polish was Kraj Rad, and we gave them courtesy copies of American magazines and that was about the extent of our contact.

During my year in Poznan, which of course led up through the summer of '68, I well recall because as I mentioned we had those restricted areas where we could not drive, which had the odd affect of throwing us on to roads where we would never in the world have traveled had it not been for the travel restrictions, and I recall that early spring, early summer period of '68, driving a couple of times out from Poznan to Nuremberg for whatever it was, go to the dentist, to do this to do that, and noticing which I had not ever before the presence of Soviet vehicles, Red Army vehicles, particularly that last trip I took out on our way to go home, to come back to the States. And of course it was just in August of '68 that the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. I had driven through both that part of Poland and Czechoslovakia in July of '68, and I certainly recall seeing lots of vehicles and troops at the time.

Q: Who was the principal officer there?

MATTHEWS: Jack Scanlan was the principal officer and he stayed on one more year after I left.

Q: I'm interviewing him. Did either of you sense any spillover from the events of what became known as the Prague Spring? This is when there was a liberalization, socialism with a happy face, or something like that in Prague which just after you left resulted in a

rather brutal put-down by essentially the Soviets, but also Polish and East German troops were dragged into that too.

MATTHEWS: I noticed it most dramatically on the two or three trips I had from Poland to Germany by car in my little VW bug say during that fall '67 through my last trip out in July '68. The attitudes and the sort of friendliness on the part of Czech officials. We would have to cross at a border crossing with the great name of Jakuszyce, which is up at the top of a mountain range before you come out of Poland, then you drop into Czechoslovakia. And not only were they sure glad to see you, welcome, come on in, but the last two times I recall that changing money...I was always very careful to change at the official money points, no black marketing. The actual state officials handling the money exchange would take the dollars, and unlike the not so old days, not give you a receipt and you would find yourself perhaps with more crowns than the official rate would indicate. It was just a sense that there were smiles, things were relaxed, and usually we would stay a bit in Prague, even if we just drove by to say hello to a friend in the embassy there, and the atmosphere was much more friendly.

Q: Were you noticing before you left the Polish press gearing up to do something—huffing and puffing about what was happening in Prague?

MATTHEWS: The Polish press was very, very harsh and bad. It was just a bad press during that whole time. It could have been the height of Stalinism as far as any amenities or niceties on the part of the Polish press including periodic acid shots on what the Americans were up to here, there and everywhere. That was sort of a constant, a given. I'm sure there were articles railing against the would be reformers, Dubcek and the others.

Q: Then you went to Columbia. You were at Columbia from '68 to '69. Because this is an important preparation of many of our people who became Soviet specialists went through, I mean Columbia was sort of the place. Could you give me a feeling about the training and

some of the intellectual atmosphere at this particular time at Columbia. What were you picking up?

MATTHEWS: Of course Columbia University is one of the world's great places and I thoroughly enjoyed it. We were living at West 71st Street, a block off Broadway, a block away from Needle Park as I recall.

Q: Needle Park a place where the drug...

MATTHEWS: Right. It was a great year. I had great professors at Columbia. The acting dean of the School of International Affairs was at that time a senior, very prestigious Foreign Service officer, Willis Armstrong. He was holding that as a temporary position because the incumbent had suddenly departed or died. I did work both within the East Central European Institute which was headed by a Hungarian refugee originally, a very interesting man, Istvan Deak, and did some work under him. Then there were good people throughout in terms of specialists on the Balkans, on the Baltic areas, and then Polish...

Q: You were pointed towards Russia, the Soviet Union.

MATTHEWS: I wasn't really. I took some of my work. I took, for example, Brzezinski's course, the dynamics of Soviet politics, a basic graduate school survey course, and some other work. But I was still keen on staying in the East European speciality. I was aware there was a Soviet Union out there, but didn't particularly aspire to jump ship as it were, from Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union. I did take advantage of Columbia's extremely good Russian program to study Russian, including staying on that summer of '68 after I found out I was being assigned to the Office of Soviet Affairs, to study Russian intensively. It was a great year and among other outstanding professors, there was Joseph Rothschild who was a specialist, was and is I believe, in the history of Eastern Europe between the wars. That was just phenomenally insightful. Alexander Dallin, I took at least six hours of

work under him. It was a very, very stimulating year, and I used the time to get another Master's degree.

Q: Did you run afoul at all of the SDS movement, Students for Democratic Society who were rather extreme left-wing, anti-Vietnam war. This was sort of the height of this.

MATTHEWS: It was, and they were sort of anti everything. It wasn't just Vietnam. There was never a week there, I'm sure, when there wasn't some demonstration out by the Alma Mater statue in the middle of the campus. I recall once, and I don't even recall what the particular grievance was, a gang of these would-be students showed up outside one of the main lecture halls and ordered everyone out. There were classes being conducted in there, I was in one of them and whoever the professor was teaching it at the time, said he would call a halt to the class, and we all exited the building via the windows. That year of '68-'69 was quite tumultuous, and among others, I think, Alex Dallin and maybe at least one of the other professors that taught a class of mine, served on the faculty committee to try to cope and come to terms with the so- called grievances of these groups. I don't think they were ever able to come to terms with it because when they would try to dispose of one grievance there were ten to take the place of it.

Q: Their object was grievances.

MATTHEWS: That's right. I remember thinking at the time, well, is this connected just to Vietnam, and quickly it became clear that it ranged far beyond that, how they were being treated, how the neighborhood is treated.

Q: There was a park dispute. All in all I think they were one of the reasons in the Chicago convention of 1968 that helped elect Richard Nixon. Just to see those sort of wild-eyed youth on TV day after day made people yearn for something more stable. Hence, Richard Nixon.

MATTHEWS: In fact, I well recall the election of November of '68. Nixon's transition headquarters at least initially was at the Hotel Pierre there in New York City.

Q: Incidentally, while you were at Columbia...I mean you'd arrived just after the crushing of the Czech relaxation, what were you getting from the experts on Eastern Europe about what did that mean?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, and my memory is probably a little dim here, there was a lot of debate about what did this mean for the future of the evolution of socialism in Eastern Europe. I mean, you had the Polish way, you had the movement by Dubcek, the fall of the Prague Spring. There was a lot of talk about, what does this mean for the concept of Marxism with a human face, etc. I don't have any recollection that there were any real conclusions as to where this would lead.

Q: Did you find within what one can describe as the intellectual community at Columbia, any strong trend of looking at Marxism in a favorable light? Because Marxism had never died out in American campuses, and I would have thought in the New York environment, Columbia, that you'd get a fairly high dosage from some of the professors, Marxism being the wave of the future.

MATTHEWS: That was about, and I think I would really have run into it had I reported there in the summer of '67-'68 to those professors. It would have seemed, before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, like you were seeing the evolution of this. As I say, Marxism was interpreted as having a kinder, gentler face. My memory is that a lot of this debate that I sort of recall, was over the shock, if you will, of the Brezhnev doctrine, which basically held we're not going to let things ever get to the point where someone can relax and have a more democratic approach. To some extent that probably, it seems to me, stymied the leftist tendencies on campus. I must say subsequently wherever I did a lot of talking on US foreign policy issues, and on US-Soviet relations around the US, you're absolutely right. There were sappy leftist tendencies on the part of most members of academia.

Q: So you moved over to Soviet affairs, SOV, in the Department of State, and you were there from when to when?

MATTHEWS: I arrived there in the summer of '69. At that time the Office of Soviet Affairs had two main sections, bilateral political relations, and multilateral political relations. Bilateral political relations was your day-to-day normal back and forth relations with the Soviet embassy in Washington, and of course our embassy in Moscow, and all the things that go on in terms of bilateral issues. The section I was in, multilateral political relations, was essentially to deal with all of the other issues where we and the Soviets came into conflict, for the most part, conflict and competition. That involved what they were up to in Asia, Africa, the Mid-East, Latin America and, of course, Europe. It also involved functional issues, certain scientific nuclear related issues, limited space cooperation. Many of these cooperative programs were in their extremely initial formulative stages. It was essentially a very competitive adversarial relationship. And most of my two years in that job was, in fact, dealing with the problems of how the Soviets were basically trying to screw us every place in the world that they could conceivably have a chance of doing that, and what we should therefore do about it.

Q: Who was the head of Soviet affairs at that time?

MATTHEWS: Spike Dubs was the head of the desk at the time. A great guy, a dear friend.

Q: He'd been chief of the political section, political counselor in Belgrade when I was there, and later assassinated in Afghanistan.

MATTHEWS: Herb Okun was the deputy director of the office, later ambassador to East Germany, and the UN, also a good friend. My immediate boss, the officer in charge, head of the multilateral political section, was Lewis Bowden. He's still around and I see Lew from time to time. And generally in that section we had five officers assigned to it. Jack Perry came in to be head of the section for my second year. We always had officers

assigned there more or less who were experienced in the region of the world where you were tracking what the Soviets were doing, and dealing with the policy implications for the US For example, our chap who looked at the Mid-East was someone who not only was an Arabist in our Foreign Service, but had also served a stint in Moscow. My watching brief was Eastern Europe and Germany, since I had experience in both of those areas. Similarly the other guy that worked full-time almost on China and other areas of the Asia Pacific had also served in that region. I'll come back to this office later on because some years later I came back to be the head of that office.

Q: Again, it was '69 to '71. In the first place, to recreate the time, could you explain how we saw the Soviet threat at that time?

MATTHEWS: Well, the Soviet threat was certainly seen as very real, very possible. This was in the aftermath still of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the expressions of the Brezhnev doctrine. They had laid it out pretty clearly, this is how it was going to be, by golly, etc. Of course, this was also the period when we had our own major buildup in Vietnam, and the US perceived threats in many areas of the world, either directly from the Soviet Union, or backed by them, the liberation movements in Africa, Latin America, you name it. So it was a highly adversarial and confrontational time, and virtually all of our considerable work pertained to that side of things. There were very, very limited cooperative contacts between the US and the Soviet Union, including some limited cooperation on retrieving space objects which came down from orbit.

Q: Nuclear matters...we both wanted to keep other countries from getting in the club.

MATTHEWS: We had a committee for disarmament in Geneva, and there were the SALT negotiations.

Q: One of the charges that has been made, and particularly made a little later during the Kissinger time which would be just after you left there...or you got a little of that while you were there.

MATTHEWS: He was still at the NSC.

Q: Right, you were there during his time. We saw things as a global conflict with the Soviet Union, whereas most of the disputes, particularly the Middle East...the problem there was mainly Israel, there were other problems. In Africa most of the problems were at a local basis, and Latin America was the same thing. You were at the heart of the monster looking at it almost from what the Soviet Union was doing. Did you find you were at all in conflict with what you might call regionalists against globalists within the Department?

MATTHEWS: No, I don't recall any of that. In fact it was our office which had most of the contacts with the regional bureaus, obviously NEA, the Middle East Bureau, or FE, or East Asian Pacific affairs would have people directly dealing with these issues. But I can't recall any time really when...you're right, we did tend to take the global challenge as it was presented, and something which had to be dealt with. My recollection is that we worked quite congenially with the regional bureaus, and that there weren't any great differences of opinion in that regard. We also worked very closely with INR, the Intelligence and Research Bureau, which had a very strong Soviet and East European research office at the time.

Q: Your particular area of focus was East Europe and Germany...

MATTHEWS: And the whole then budding steps, some very tentative, many very propagandistic on the part of the Soviet Union and its allies, to marshal up a European Security Conference, the big grand poobah of all gatherings of European nations.

Q: What was the European Security Conference?

MATTHEWS: Viewed from 1996, or even a few years ago, one would say now that back then it really was the precursor to what eventually became the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. But at that time, and I well recall, it was seen almost entirely as a ploy on the part of the Soviet Union to score propaganda points, and to divide us to the extent it might succeed, to divide us from our good and loyal NATO allies who might be more susceptible to these insidious aspirations for contacts in this and that field. Not much happened. Every now and then there would be a major piece in Pravda or a Soviet government commentary on the need for this or that in European security, and we would mutter back about self-serving aims of this and then it would all subside until the next Soviet thing got cranked up. It seemed more or less perfunctory on their part. They were doing the same thing, by the way, in terms of Asian security schemes which we were equally suspicious of, with good reason I believe. It was all seen as being in that vein.

Q: From your perspective we're seeing a stepped-up Soviet domination within the area you're looking at—the European, Germany and Eastern Europe—after the Czech business, were the Soviets calling the shots a little more than before?

MATTHEWS: That's my recollection, that indeed they were. Now that you ask that, I think I have that strong recollection. At that time the great exception, the beacon of “democratic life” shining away out there was, guess where? Romania.

Q: When you're dealing with Romania, Ceausescu, this is fairly early Ceausescu. Well, medium Ceausescu, he'd been there for a while. Was there any disquiet on your part...I'm talking about our representatives and what we're getting from the embassy about what was happening in Romania?

MATTHEWS: I don't recall any. But on the other hand my good friends in the office of East European affairs, where I always thought I should have been anyway rather than in Soviet affairs, I can't fully ever recall anyone expressing undue concern about the course of events in Romania. Generally it was known to be the very authoritarian, dictatorial place

that it was in fact was. But on the other hand, the whole region was so dominated by the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, actually, Nixon had made a trip there.

MATTHEWS: Nixon made a trip there, that's right.

Q: Probably '69ish. I remember when I was in Saigon in 1970 I had to get William Randolph Hearst II, who was as far right as you could come had been on a trip with Nixon going to Romania, but the fact he had a communist visa in his passport I had to personally vouch for him at the Saigon airport.

MATTHEWS: Yes, you've got to watch out for these people with communist visas in their passports. No, you're right, in fact that was the spirit of the times.

Q: Were you all feeling the hand of the NSC and Henry Kissinger during this time? Or were you kind of far removed from all that?

MATTHEWS: It was a very congenial hand in my personal experience. The chap at the NSC with whom we dealt most directly was Bill Hyland, who was and is a marvelous person. An expert in his own right, a very solid person. My memory is that on certain things we needed an NSC chop, though I don't think to the extent that you do now. Everything now flows electronically so essentially you get it that way. But back then it was a pretty big deal, call up the NSC and talk to the person...usually Bill Hyland if you needed a clearance because you were doing such and such. I recall doing that, several times, for greetings on national day events, pretty tame stuff but it seemed pretty exciting at the time. I don't have any memory of calls from the NSC, why have you done this, why are you not doing that? It seemed to be quite congenial.

Q: Were there any issues at the time that particularly engaged your attention, incidence issues?

MATTHEWS: The big, big incident of the time that affected my colleagues in the Office of Bilateral relations was the case of the seaman, it turned out a Lithuanian-American seaman who jumped ship, in Boston I think it was and was returned to the Soviet ship captain.

Q: The Coast Guard returned him after a rather perfunctory check. A lot of heads rolled on that one.

MATTHEWS: So that was a painful experience for many as you know. I know there were periodic problems and incidents of an espionage or other nature, although since my duties were in multilateral affairs it was really hearing about them from the colleagues who were having to manage the bilateral aspects of the problem in the office of bilateral relations.

Q: What was the feeling you were getting from the Soviet desk? Was there a feeling of comfort with Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the saddle?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes. I certainly have no memory whatsoever of any discomfort. It was felt, I believe, we all felt that we were managing the major relationship, challenge if you will, as handsomely as could be. There was, I think, a decent interface with our embassy in Moscow about issues and we always paid great respect and heed to cables from the embassy and particularly if they were from the ambassador himself.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MATTHEWS: I think Foy Kohler was there for part of that time. Malcolm Toon, I think, was subsequently our ambassador there during part of my second tour on the Soviet desk. An assignment to the embassy in Moscow was sort of the Mecca for many of those aspiring to go on in Soviet affairs.

Q: You left in '71. Where did you go?

MATTHEWS: Well, herein lies a tale.

Q: What happened then after 1971 when you left the Soviet Bureau?

MATTHEWS: In late 1970, I think it would have been, I was delightfully informed that I would be assigned to embassy Moscow via a year in Garmisch, that was then the Army language school, or whatever they called it, Detachment A or R, and which you can appreciate, was wonderful. And I began to think my way into that. At about the very same time, I was rung up by the chap who was handling assignments to Vietnam, who asked if I would come by and talk to him about taking up an assignment in Vietnam. I went by to talk to him, and to make a long story short, I decided to abort the assignment to the Soviet Union, Garmisch, etc., in favor of going to Vietnam.

Q: Looking at it from a career point of view, the Mecca for anybody involved in Eastern European affairs, and particularly going to the Garmisch thing, would be Moscow. Vietnam by '71 was beginning to go down hill.

MATTHEWS: It was the beginning of the Vietnamization program, a real turning point, and that to me is what it was. Of course, I had long thought about Vietnam. It had been a consuming experience, as you know, for many during the ''60s, and I just felt I wanted to be a part of it one way or the other. In my case it was indicated that...and I also wanted to go up where there would be action.

Q: In old Civil War terms, it was known as seeing the elephant, which is exactly what I did.

MATTHEWS: I hadn't heard that, that's a good term. I was given fair assurance that I could be posted up to I Corps near Da Nang, the northern most part of South Vietnam. And, in fact, all of that came to be. Of course, everyone in the office of Soviet affairs thought I was mad to do this, but I did it. So I eventually took some training at the Vietnam training center, located in Rosslyn.

Q: It was in the garage?

MATTHEWS: No. It was in a separate building at the time. And I had a minimal fast course, very fast, in elementary Vietnamese, and shipped out and got to Vietnam in August of '71.

Q: I always like to put at the beginning of a section, you were in Vietnam from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From August of 1971 through March of 1973. So I arrived in Saigon, hot and humid, all those well known attributes, the sounds, the smells, and sorted out the initial confusion of their not being quite sure of who I was, when I was arriving, but that was sorted out. I had been somewhat anticipated, so I was eventually sent out to Ton Son Nhet airport, put on a DC-3 or C-47, the military version of the old DC-3, and flown to Da Nang up in the northern part of South Vietnam for assignment to Hoi An, which was then and now the provincial capital of Quang Nam province, slightly south of Da Nang, sort of surrounding it, a very hot action area for especially Viet Cong at the time, although also including North Vietnamese regulars. The adjoining province was Quang Nai, of course, where the My Lai incident took place. I was assigned as assistant province senior advisor for Pacification. Indeed, there was a lot of pacifying, and I primarily worked with Vietnamese military people for the most part, but also some civilian people across the range of programs. I found it utterly fascinating. It had its unpleasant moments, we were being shelled and mortared, mostly mortared, but we were out in the field a lot which I liked.

I replaced a fellow who had been killed when his jeep ran over a mine in a little village. This was one of the same villages where I went in periodically to check on this and that. I always thought of that chap when I rode over the same roads. He had the bad luck to hit the mine. It was a time, speaking about Vietnamization, when all of the main force units, US main forces were being withdrawn. We had essentially an advisory effort for

pacification throughout the province, which had maybe eight districts, with small teams of US military personnel. I had a lot to do with that because, being the senior advisor in charge of pacification, I dealt a lot with those programs that were administered by the district team, so I was out all the time either by helicopter, and also often by road. I always felt that I should be out there on the same roads that I would tell other people were more or less safe to drive, at least during the daytime. I would have quite happily finished off my time in Quang Nam. I got to know a lot of the Vietnamese officials, including Buddhist officials who had a number of criticisms of the South Vietnamese regime to say the least.

But then I was asked in early 1972 to transfer to Thua Thien province north of Quang Nam, to be the deputy province senior advisor. We had a somewhat larger advisory team there. Not too long after my arrival the North Vietnamese army sprang a surprise attack, the so-called Easter offensive. Strong North Vietnamese forces came storming down highway 1, across the demilitarized zone, wrapped up all of Quang Tri province which was the northern most province of the demilitarized zone, and came on across the provincial border into Thua Thien, heading toward Hue with Soviet-made armor, armored personnel carriers and all manner of heavy artillery. This was major combat, and of course being deputy at that point, I worked directly with the province chief who was a colonel, and was charged with provincial forces in all of Thua Thien. Well, when the North Vietnamese invasion took place, mostly coming due south from the north, as well as some elements of North Vietnamese guerrillas coming in from the west from the mountains off the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the main line South Vietnamese forces, the first infantry division plus the South Vietnamese also had a Marine division, those troops were all thrown up against the North Vietnamese regulars, along with a number of our regional provincial forces. And eventually we fought back the North Vietnamese and they were all but decimated, those that would be caught out.

Q: In a way this helped lead to the peace accords. I mean it was a time when they tried a real main line attack, battle attack, and it didn't work.

MATTHEWS: And, of course, the reason the North Vietnamese were eventually beaten back is we brought in massive air power, B-52s flying out of Thailand, which we called Arc Lights, to bring against those elements, we also had Tac Air mostly flying out of Da Nang and elsewhere in Vietnam. And also I think we still had one squadron of US helicopter gunships which we could call on for support. We essentially had beaten back the North Vietnamese by the end of April-early May. The rest of my time there was marked by incursions, usually by North Vietnamese forces because the Viet Cong there as elsewhere up in that part of Vietnam had really been quite severely decimated during the Tet Offensive of '68. A lot of their infrastructure had been destroyed. So there were Viet Cong elements but most of what we had to deal with were North Vietnamese regular army forces, making incursions into the low lands coming out of the mountains off the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This is subsequent to the big Easter offensive. At that point they weren't trying to get down across the DMZ anymore. But my memory of my service there was mostly one of being either on the ground or up in the helicopter with my counterpart, the Vietnamese province chief, the commander of sector forces while we were responding to whatever incursion there had been the night before on the part of North Vietnamese forces.

Q: I'd like to go back first when you're in Hue, and then move to the other. Can you tell me what a pacification officer...what did you do? Talk about maybe a day, the type of things and more details.

MATTHEWS: Well, it's hard to explain. This was the CORDS program in revolutionary development support, it was the pacification program. Bill Colby helped set it up. Bob Komer was a big wheel in that. These were high officials. There was a very fine gentleman, Colonel Jacobson, who worked out of the embassy in Saigon. Colonel Jacobson was a heck of a nice guy. He'd had a prominent role in defending the embassy during the Viet Cong attack during the Tet offensive. CORDS was a panoply of programs, with liberal doses of US funds to further civic development. It was everything from building school houses and clinics, and providing tractors, to trying to train village peasants to

guard their own perimeters at night. I came in just at the transition point when the Phoenix program which was designed to identify and capture or kill members of the Viet Cong infrastructure when that was being transitioned to the same program with a Vietnamese name, Phung Huang. There was much less US involvement with it, although there were some of us who did work in that area.

The pacification program, at least as it then existed up where I was in Vietnam, had its very distinctly civil peaceful purposes and aspects, how to provide equipment—tractors, maybe even miracle rice seed to peasants who were trying to develop their rice paddies, or their lands, to new school buildings, new clinics, to the other end of the spectrum which is where you were trying to deal with the quite significant military threat, and terror as a threat, on the part of the Viet Cong and up where I was more often than not the North Vietnamese regular army. So it encompassed a wide range of programs. When I was in Hui An in Quang Nam province, that tended to be more towards the civilian side of the spectrum. We would certainly get involved periodically in the military aspect, and we were shelled, mostly mortared, periodically at night by the enemy. But it was more of a mixed civilian and para-military operation focused on aid programs and counter-insurgency programs.

Once I transferred from Thua Thien to Hue, it moved quite quickly and significantly towards the military side of the spectrum because of the enormous enemy threats that we had there.

Q: Before we move to the military side, how effective did you find the South Vietnamese government, problems of corruption or direction, or what have you?

MATTHEWS: I have to say, and I've thought about it a lot, that obviously there was corruption. This was not only, if you will, the Southeast Asian way of doing certain things, but there was a war going on and you had all the elements that create fertile ground for that kind of thing. On the other hand, I must say I often was operating in very hostile

territory with just Vietnamese colleagues and I never had any reason to doubt their effectiveness, their dedication, and the like. I worked almost all the time with Vietnamese, not with other Americans, and with the benefit of hindsight after the fall of Vietnam in '75, it always struck me, even when I was there, but later after I left—perhaps you shared this too—that we had the great luxury that we could go in and however long we stayed, there was a finite end to our tour, even on the part of those of us that were there more than the eleven months-thirteen months, whatever it was the usual military tour. But those guys, whether they were colonels or buck privates, they were there forever, no matter what happened.

Q: And the war had been going on...

MATTHEWS: The war had gone on forever.

Q: ...more than a decade.

MATTHEWS: So I could never fault them if we were going out on a patrol in an area of the province which was appropriately notorious for being dangerous, you could never really fault the captain, or whoever it was on the Vietnamese side for choosing a path that was less likely to bring him into a booby trap or to an ambush, because two months down the road, or a year later, he was going to be on some path where that probably would happen.

Q: When you were dealing with a situation during the Easter offensive, and that period being on the military side...here you are, you're a civilian, what were you doing on the military side? I'm talking about specifics.

MATTHEWS: Well, I really wasn't a civilian in many of my duties. We must be very candid about the hierarchy of the CORDS operation. My boss was a full colonel. I was his deputy, a lieutenant colonel, and then the officers working for me were majors and lieutenant colonels. When I went out on military operations, as I did with the province chief and others, I put on a green suit...I certainly wasn't out there in a suit and tie. There were no

distinctions. None of us in the advisory effort at that point were commanding troops in the field. For that we relied on our Vietnamese counterparts. But the US colonel, whose deputy I was, had his family safe-havened in the Philippines, so he traveled there quite regularly. And, of course, I became the acting senior advisor and it seemed more often than not every time that happened some big enemy incursion would take place so we would be up there shooting and getting shot at.

Q: What would you do? I mean specifically.

MATTHEWS: Well, specifically we would help with the communications and logistics. Obviously we had our regular radio nets, etc., but we still had some helicopter gunship assets which I could call for and usually get if there wasn't a higher priority elsewhere in the province, and bring those in in support of say an operation to retake a village. That happened quite regularly. If it was really a major concentration of North Vietnamese forces you could ask for US tactical air to come in for air strikes. Although by the time I was up in Thua Thien those tactical air support assets were already quite diminished over what it had been a year earlier in Quang Nam. We had, as I recall, some role in bidding...you actually bid on B-52 strikes, but that was in the mountainous portions of the province. Not that many miles removed from where you were, but that was more against suspected major concentrations of North Vietnamese forces, and those requests would perhaps come from the province chief who got it from one of his commanders that there was a North Vietnamese main force battalion at such and such coordinates, say west of Hue, and we would go through our military advisory channels and try to get air strikes. The sort of normal week in and week out stuff would involve our essentially being lips and teeth with the Vietnamese forces to show solidarity, and usually they sustained the effort on their own part. I was in a number of fire fights together with my Vietnamese colonel where there were no US assets to support us. When we could, we would support them with air, including flying in their troops.

Q: Did you find yourself using weapons?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes.

Q: At the level you're dealing with, your bag is diplomacy and this is...

MATTHEWS: This bag was never diplomacy.

Q: But there is something about being a professional military man who has gone through the whole training, so by the time you get to lieutenant colonel you've got somebody who understands infantry, air tactics, the whole thing. And you had some military experience, didn't you? But like most of us, it wasn't at that level of sophistication or experience. How did this translate?

MATTHEWS: It seemed to be no problem because at that point where I was in Vietnam with the nature of the challenges we faced, we were sort of all in it together. As I say, it was not a question of commanding troops in the field. That's a military prerogative as it should be, but because of the peculiar and unique situation that prevailed in the “advisory program” there were few distinctions between whether you were a serving US colonel or a serving US Foreign Service officer holding the billet of a colonel. The bane of our existence I should say, or certainly mine but I can say ours, once I transferred up to Hue was related to the North Vietnamese Easter offensive, that was eventually broken and thrown back, but related to that was that the North Vietnamese had brought off the Ho Chi Minh Trail Soviet heavy artillery, 122 millimeter and 130 millimeter artillery, and put them in caves and other well concealed spots in the mountains overlooking Hue, from where selectively they would shell us several times a week. And unlike the notoriously inaccurate 122 millimeter rockets, which I was quite familiar with from Quang Nam, or even the 81 millimeter mortars, the artillery, of course, is deadly accurate once you have your marking rounds in the box. So my memories of my assignment there are probably especially vivid from the shellings, especially when the shells killed and injured people around me.

Q: How did you find the morale of the South Vietnamese during this period you were there?

MATTHEWS: Coming back to what I said a moment ago, that all things considered and given the fact that they were going to be there until the end no matter what, it was astonishingly good. The major exception to that, which was a real catharsis for all of us...I shall never forget this, was as a consequence of the Paris Accords which would lead up to the cease fire in February of 1973. I recall going over to province headquarters, this was in advance of the public announcement, to present to the Vietnamese colonel, I can't remember if the province senior advisor, the US colonel, was there with me or whether I was acting but I was with a couple of other Americans. And I'll never forget how shocked and bitter he was when we briefed him on what all was to transpire, and, as you recall Stu, a major provision of the agreement was that North Vietnam was allowed to keep its forces that it then had within South Vietnam. The province chief exploded into, I'd say anguish, more than anger, but there was certainly some anger there. My God, he said, this will be the end of us for sure because there's no way in the world that you can have a deal with Hanoi which leaves in place, as it were, massive numbers of North Vietnamese troops, and not think that whenever they choose, they will strike us again. And I remember we had talking points, the usual this and that to mollify him, and I said no, no, the US will be very much watching this and we'll be quick to react if there should be...

Q: Was that close to the end by the time you were leaving?

MATTHEWS: That's right. In fact I had the unique experience of going out to the Hue airport...we were asked to make ready, and at this point I had been appointed the province senior advisor, the senior person, and on very short notice we were to make ready billeting arrangements for the North Vietnamese party which would arrive from Hanoi to take over its role in the cease fire peace deal. So among my last experiences in Hue was going out to the airfield, the main one outside of Hue, and being there that night when a US C-130 flew in and out of the plane stepped 30-40 North Vietnamese officers in uniform.

Of course, we had security all over the place to get them safely to where they were being billeted.

Q: You left there when?

MATTHEWS: I left right around the first of March. Suffice it to say in the strange and wondrous workings of things, I had no idea of what was to become of me following my assignment to Vietnam. I would happily have stayed on in Vietnam. I found it fascinating, loved Southeast Asia then, still do. To my utter astonishment I got a telegram. One of those things where they actually paste the words across the yellow piece of paper, informing me that I was being directly transferred from Hue, Republic of Vietnam, to Leningrad, USSR, via Russian refresher training.

Q: So we'll pick it up next time, but first when you left in March 1973, in your impression, whither South Vietnam?

MATTHEWS: My impressions, which were very much affected by the anguish of the province chief, were that we certainly had not seen the end of this. I never had any sense that the US would not follow through and stand up and be counted if the North Vietnamese did not observe the cease-fire for their part. I was shocked when it happened and the US did nothing to help.

Q: The next time we'll pick it up when you're leaving Vietnam, and you're going to Leningrad via refresher Russian training. — Today is the 29th of August 1996. Gary, you had a couple of other things you wanted to say about Vietnam before we move to Leningrad.

MATTHEWS: It was just a brief postscript commentary on why I had the kind of tour in Vietnam that I had. I believe I indicated that included a good bit of involvement in military operations. Two points: one, that really was peculiar to where I was which was up north close to the demilitarized zone, and the time I was there which was really the teeth of

Vietnamization if you will and we were working exclusively, or more and more with the Vietnamese. But there is a larger point I wanted to make and I didn't want to forget. I always felt very keenly, and I believe I was right, that I couldn't go in to the province chief, deputy province chief, my counterparts, and always be pushing on them to respect civil liberties, to do more for village chiefs, hamlet chiefs, to remove corrupt district chiefs, in other words, that whole range of civilian operations and responsibilities, I couldn't credibly do that, and then when I was also their advisor, if you will, in the overall sense back off and say, well, on the military combat side I'll be home in my hotel and let me know how it turned out. I felt I needed to be present for both the good and the not so good.

Q: Just a feeling about this. It's not in the unwritten contract for Foreign Service officers to be intimate participants in military actions. Did the State Department make any acknowledgment of this sort of thing?

MATTHEWS: Well, I don't think the “State Department” had very much knowledge of what many of us over there were doing. In my case to the extent that they took particular note of it, I was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Bronze Star, for one heavy firefight during military operations following the spring 1972 enemy offensive. That was sent through channels and I was formally, through the Office of Protocol, granted permission to accept that award officially. But in terms of any one person in the State Department really knowing anything about what we were all about there at the time, they really didn't. I worked, as most of my colleagues did in that area, the CORDS area, directly for MACV. And our bosses were military guys. And the guys working directly with us, and under us, were often military.

Q: Then you're off to Leningrad, and you're there from when to when?

MATTHEWS: I was in Leningrad for three full years as it turned out. I got there in late July of 1973, and stayed until July of 1976. I think on paper my initial assignment was for two years, and then I put in a request which was quickly granted, to extend on for a third year.

Q: This was the end of the Kissinger and what there was of the Ford administration essentially.

MATTHEWS: That's correct. In fact, I arrived just as the consulate general, the first ever in the Soviet Union, was officially opened. So my whole tenure there was both consolidating the physical plant of our building in beautiful downtown Leningrad, as well as opening up the contacts both in Leningrad and in the very wide far-reaching rich consular district that comprised the Leningrad consulate general's jurisdiction.

Q: Your position was?

MATTHEWS: I was the deputy principal officer, and also the political-economic reporting officer.

Q: Who was the principal officer?

MATTHEWS: When I first arrived it was Culver Gleysteen, whom I had known back in the Department years before in my earlier stint in Soviet affairs. And then after one year he finished his tour because he had been there earlier with the advance party, and my final two years were with a marvelous person, the late Joe Neubert.

Q: What was the Leningrad consular district?

MATTHEWS: It was indescribably diverse...I shouldn't say indescribably because I will describe it, broad and diverse. In the first instance it included the capital cities of the Baltic republics, Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius, and as a practical matter, of course we were very careful about the non-recognition policy of the Baltic nations. I say as a practical matter because we were the contact point for dissidents, people who had been refused exit visas, and the like, and I made quite frequent visits to those areas, usually to the capitals, but on occasion to other areas within the republics.

Up north, you might say way north, we had Murmansk, Archangel, and that was the furthermost area that we had as part of the consular district. Then we had all of Karelia, Petrozavodsk being the main city there. Then we had Pskov and Norgorod, that's up towards Moscow way. So it was very, very wide and rich.

Q: This is the opening of Nixon and Kissinger putting a great stress on relations with the Soviet Union, not necessarily friendly, but proper relations at that time. How were you received in Leningrad, and how did you deal with the Leningrad authorities?

MATTHEWS: The Leningrad authorities were very proper. I mean, officially they were welcoming in the sense that the reason we had opened a consulate general there, and the Soviet Union had opened its consulate correspondingly in San Francisco, was indeed the result of one of the summit meetings, Nixon-Brezhnev, I believe the summit of 1972. So officially, in the sense that this had been agreed at the highest level, the officials concerned with us were, shall we say, proper. The many other entities that made up Soviet officialdom, first and foremost including the KGB, were less pleased to have a fairly substantial American presence there. So the surveillance and the constant attempts by the KGB to get a handle on what we were doing, marked my entire three years there. The KGB was very active, and as I subsequently heard from someone, they considered it a point of pride that they could have their controls, their monitoring, of the Americans in particular and other resident foreigners, not that there were too many at that time, they could exercise that to a far greater degree than their colleagues in Moscow where, of course, there were many more missions and many more foreigners. So in that sense we had the darker side of the Soviet Union.

Q: Speaking of the KGB, in earlier times the KGB was always trying to trap people, either homosexual, ladies and various things. Was this part of a different era? Did you feel, not just you but the officers there had to really watch entrapment?

MATTHEWS: Oh we did, definitely. The earlier era still very much prevailed, and this was well before any relaxation on the part of the security organs, as they called themselves. So we did indeed have to be quite attentive. There were, by the way, about ten other foreign consulates in Leningrad, most of which were very, very small. A couple of exceptions to that: one, which was very active and extremely helpful to us, the Finns, the Finnish consulate general which was located not far from where our consulate was and is. They were very helpful because they were already there when we arrived, helpful in getting us logistically plugged in. In fact, over some time, I crafted a series of arrangements so that we got, especially in the winter, fresh fruit and vegetables from a little town across the border in Finland called Hamina. We had a monthly run with a van up there. The Germans were there, both East and West Germans, and we enjoyed particularly close relationships with the West Germans, the Federal Republic of Germany. The Finns I mentioned. We had similar very congenial relations with the Swedes who had a very active consulate general there, small but active. And similarly with the French, and to some extent the Japanese which was a very tiny operation. There were not very many resident foreigners, there were no resident foreign media.

Q: What about dealing with the citizens of Leningrad? One always hears that they take a different view than the Muscovites. Did you find this?

MATTHEWS: There was, and I believe today is, a pride that they are different. They were Leningraders, today they're St. Petersburgers. There was a saying, in Russian, meaning sure, Moscow is the capital but Leningrad is not the second city. So there was a pride, being descendants of Peter the Great, etc. And that was evidenced both by officials and I felt usually by people we came in contact with. We had to be fairly careful with at least contacts that we might initiate with a purely private person, because with heavy KGB surveillance and interest in us, there were instances when this would happen inadvertently. We would make some contact and we would later hear that person was called in for questioning.

Q: What did you see as your main task?

MATTHEWS: I felt, and I believe my colleagues did, first and foremost we had the horrendous job of getting the operations of the consulate general up and going. And this was a humongous undertaking because we had to finish off the consulate building, building and equipping portions of it which Soviet workers had not completed for good reason. And we also needed to establish the pattern of contacts, and find out who is who, who is where. Along with that, I would say, our big job there was information gathering. What do people think about this and that, the Soviet Union? How do they view such and such policies, what's going on here, and that extended to the very heavy defense industry, and nuclear submarine ship building, and other activities in the port area. So we had quite an active operation there.

Q: Could you talk a bit about finishing off the building? Because a great scandal around this time was the new embassy building in Moscow which turned out to be absolutely riddled with listening devices.

MATTHEWS: Well the new embassy building was starting then, the scandal came ten or more years later.

Q: How about what you were...

MATTHEWS: There were never any illusions about the situation in Leningrad because we were on an old street, and ours was a townhouse abutted on both sides by other buildings. There was never any doubt that both wired systems, as well as electronic systems, were at play in terms of intelligence gathering. You were very, very conscious of that at all times.

Q: How does one work in that environment?

MATTHEWS: It's not at all difficult. There are excellent ways to handle that sort of thing.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia and we had the plastic room, and unfortunately the ambassador smoked cigars which didn't help.

MATTHEWS: No, no, I should think not. My remark when I say we had ways of handling that, I didn't mean by any means the so-called plastic room. But in terms of being very careful about what we said, and didn't say, what instruments we would use to write on. Our transmission inscription capabilities, I believe that all went very well. In fact, there are some very simple methods to communicate. If you had something truly that must remain totally quiet to anyone who is listening, there are simple but very effective ways to do that.

Q: I think it's interesting to understand the environment. Did you feel that listening devices were just about anywhere, including the bedroom and everything else?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes, and they were. There's no doubt about that. I satisfied myself on several occasions until it proved there was no further purpose served in trying to find just where things might be, because they were there. There were ways to check to see if things were there. But I don't want to paint a picture of unrelenting grimness here. For one thing, I was used to this way of life from two years in Poland where these things were not unknown, although there was no comparison with the intensity of how this was brought to bear in Leningrad. We were very busy and I think that was a great thing. For one thing, in addition to all the activities connected with consolidating the post physical and political-economic operations, we had a pretty heavy pattern of travel that I was responsible for setting up, and conducted a lot of it myself. It had me out with someone else somewhere usually once a month.

The third big area of activity was the one that was given us usually every weekend: to wit, all the American delegations, of which there were a lot, going primarily first and foremost to Moscow would be sent up to us on the weekends, very happily so from the standpoint of the people in Moscow. That is, both Soviet officials as well as the officials in the American embassy because we would show them Leningrad. We had, of course, the Hermitage, the

Winter Palace, the outlying palaces...you know, Leningrad is a glorious city, St. Petersburg is a glorious city. So there was never a dull moment in terms of visiting congressmen, senators, governors, state officials, scientific groups. you name it.

Q: How were these groups treated?

MATTHEWS: Generally the groups were treated beautifully. And if it was a high level group like a group of members of congress, governors where there was a corresponding official exchange with the Soviet Union, they were given the highest possible reception, including the Leningrad equivalent of a state dinner at the official guest house out on Stone Island. It was all very la-dee-da. Those of us at the consulate general used to laugh about how once we said farewell at the airport to our departing US delegation, it was back to more realistic times. But they were treated very well.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet economy?

MATTHEWS: It was pretty bad. I probably arrived in the Soviet Union with Poland somewhat in my mind's eye. There were a lot of provisions in Poland, but by and large, the Poles being the wonderful folks they are, they made things work even under that terrible system. Well, I arrived in the Soviet Union, and there was nothing there. It was a total economy of scarcity. There was bread, and there was greasy soup, some basics, etc., but I remember being continually impressed throughout my whole three years there by the lines, lines for everything, including lines that people just joined on the speculation that there would be something at the end of those lines. Sometimes there wasn't anything at the end of the line. And in that sense, particularly given what's happened as we look back in 1996, here was the spectacle of the great Soviet Union, this eminent superpower, which it certainly was in the sense of having extremely modern, capable intercontinental ballistic missiles, and sophisticated nuclear warheads on them which could be sent our way, tanks and artillery, and all of those indicators of brute military strength. But at the social level, at the basic human needs coping level, it was a mess, a total mess. And one of the things we

did, as they did in Moscow at the embassy, was to report quite extensively and often on the nature of the economic depravation there.

Q: I would hear this from people who served, I'd never served in the Soviet Union, I'd served in Yugoslavia, and I just figured this is a rather primitive Balkan country. But from people who had served elsewhere, it was a paradise. The Soviet Union was continually played up as being this great power. Not only with its brute military force, but there was something about it that was almost irresistible, which was very handy in political terms in the United States, also for our military. How did we feel? I mean, you get all these delegations coming in, and we're pointing out the lack of clothes on the emperor or not?

MATTHEWS: I would do that, but going back to what I said about the delegations coming in, who were given the best possible treatment by Soviet officials, it was, if you will, the 1970s equivalent of Potemkin villages. They would come in, they would be greeted with flowers, whisked off to the best hotels at the time. Our old saying was, when traveling in the Soviet Union first class is always none too good, some expression like that we had. They were bused from event to event, and an official lunch, an official dinner, to the Kirov Ballet. They would often leave, if they didn't hear anything from us, thinking this is really a fantastic place. But they were seeing just that tiny little slice on their official program. I strived mightily during my time to impress upon people that this was not the real Soviet Union they were seeing.

Q: This is the very beginning of one of the factors during this time that eventually helped undermine the Soviet Union, and that was the CSCE's conference.

MATTHEWS: That's right, Security and Security Cooperation in Europe.

Q: ...Helsinki Accords. Were these having any reverberations yet that might allow for dissent within the Soviet Union?

MATTHEWS: It was just starting, and is one of the things I will always think back on as being the most fascinating part of my three years there. I arrived just after the conclusion of the final act of CSCE and, in fact, Walter Stoessel, who was then the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, had just been at the consulate general in Leningrad a few weeks before I arrived with my family in the summer of '73 to be part of the official ribbon-cutting that opened the consulate general. The reason he was there was that he had been attending that conference in Helsinki. And as we recall, one of the big provisions of CSCE was basket three which concerned human rights, and human contacts. It was very clear, as Soviet officials were never loath to tell us, that this was just a minor thing in their view, and that the really important stuff was recognizing boundaries, legitimizing, in their view, the existence of the socialist camp, etc. But as I say, one of the fascinating things for me is to think back how the seeds of that basket three, the whole human rights area and what have you, began to grow into mighty bushes. I had already begun citing the provisions on free immigration, lack of discrimination, respect for human rights, etc., when I would go in with approaches to Soviet officials in Leningrad, usually the office of visas and registration, on behalf of a given Jewish refusenik—usually most of the people who had been turned down for exit visas were Jews from the Leningrad and Baltic areas, as well as some other dissidents, and little heed at the time was, at least in their response the Soviet officials responses to me, little heed was paid on their part to this Helsinki thing. I would always leave them a copy of the relevant portion. But, you're right, that was the genesis, and later on, of course, it grew into I think the biggest part...it was the tail that not only wagged that Soviet dog, but caused that dog to collapse.

Q: Were you ever able to have what amounted to a really professional discussion with Soviet foreign affairs officials about the state in the Soviet Union, and why the Soviet Union was sort of lagging in a lot of things. Or was this just not...

MATTHEWS: No, I had that conversation, and you got one of several reactions. One was that the Soviet officials were always very afraid of showing up on those taped transcripts

of conversations monitored by the KGB. They were very careful about what they said, and what they wouldn't say. And a couple of them acknowledged to me, very quietly, that that's why what they were responding to me sounded so stock...

When talking with Soviet officials, and plant managers, it would not have to be necessarily ministry officials, they could be managers...well, everybody in effect worked for the state because there were no private enterprises. But either they would be extremely careful to the point of being non-committal totally in responding because they would be afraid they were being overheard, or they felt they had to observe some Soviet communist party ideal, and claim ludicrously, of course, that everything was just great. Even though, God knows, they knew it wasn't. Or third, and I will say I ran into this particularly in Leningrad, you can understand why, they would acknowledge the degree of the problems of the deficiencies, whether in housing, or foodstuffs, you name it, and say, you must remember Mr. Matthews, Gospodin Matthews, that we had to endure the horrible 900 day siege of World War II, the great patriotic war, etc.

I should perhaps mention at this point one of the things that I did throughout my three years very, very regularly and it was a good thing I was young at the time because I wouldn't have the energy for it now. There was an official propaganda organization throughout the whole Soviet Union which had an extremely active chapter in Leningrad, called the Znaniye Society, Znaniye being the Russian word for knowledge. It came under the propaganda section of the authorities. And this took several forms. But the one that I was very involved in, is that several times during the week this society, whether it was at the main hall which was right in the center of Leningrad in the old...it was in the Red Army Club as a matter of fact, whether in that or in some outlying districts' smaller halls, they would have speakers come in, officials, military officers, you name it, professors, to talk about all manner of subjects in Soviet society. Sometimes international issues, but usually just what's happening here, what's our food chain like, why can't people buy cars. It was

basic stuff. So several times a week I would go quietly, and sit in the back of those halls, and take all that in, take notes, go back and write it up, and send it to Washington.

Q: What would you be getting out of this? You got a very clear sense of what the Russians were saying to their fellow Russians, what the Soviets were saying to their fellow Soviets. In other words, these people had no way of knowing that there was a foreigner in their midst, moreover one who was going to fire it back to Washington the next day in a telegram.

MATTHEWS: I don't want to sound immodest, but I was told repeatedly throughout my tour that these reports had quite a wide readership back here, in terms of providing insights into that.

Q: I've talked to others, Ed Horowitz who said also, one of the most interesting things were the questions that came up. But the questions would be...I mean, these were just people who said this was on their mind, and they had a chance, and they were going to ask the question.

MATTHEWS: Exactly. We lived for those moments. Ed, my old friend and colleague, was one of the very best. He had done this I think years ago during his first tour.

Q: Yes. I'm doing an oral history with him this morning.

MATTHEWS: And my immediate predecessor, who had been there in the advance party for Leningrad, Bob Barry, had done it. I think I probably did it more frequently, mostly because we were official then and I had a good excuse if approached as to why I was at such a gathering.

Q: Obviously the KGB would be following you. So would you see somebody whisper to the speaker.

MATTHEWS: I know of at least half a dozen instances where, because of someone I knew in the chain of things, my presence was made known to the speaker. I believe these were mostly military speakers as opposed to people speaking on domestic matters. And a bug was put in their ear that there was a foreign agent or some such, in the audience. But since I really was going mostly to these events just to hear what they were saying about ordinary life, I don't think they bothered to warn those kinds of speakers. That was where I got my jewels, and as you just noted, the real pearls came from those questions.

Q: When you say that, could you give an example of the type of thing that you would get?

MATTHEWS: Well, I well remember one instance...it sounded horribly boring, and in fact I'm sure the canned presentation was horribly boring. It was on the state of Soviet agriculture, and the speaker...I forget after all these years who it was, but the person was in the know. This wasn't just some old guy who had gotten out of his rocking chair to come in and rattle on about not much of anything. So I went. I remember asking myself, why am I doing this? I'm tired, it's 8:00 at night, why don't I just go to home? But I went, and the canned presentation was indeed horribly boring. But it was a time, as so often in Leningrad, when there were acute shortages of basic foodstuffs. That was the winter of '74, I believe, and a saying, which was very popular around Leningrad at the time, was what is the most valuable present you can bring to a Leningrader if you're coming as a visitor? Answer: a cabbage wrapped in toilet paper. And, alas, this was all too true, not just cabbages, but any other food. Toilet paper, God knows, always in short supply, probably now as then. But there ensued a ferocious series of questions on the part of the audience. And most of the audience was comprised of elderly pensioners. Who else would go to such a presentation? And I was there, of course. And so this one person stood up and said, how do you explain we've had this series of totally miserable disastrous grain crops? How could this be? We used the army, we used millions of volunteers, collective farm people, how can this happen? So the speaker was somewhat rocked back, and started quoting some statistics. So he gets pushed again by another hard question. So then he

comes back with a specific. I've never forgotten this but I had it written up in some detail. And then a fourth person stands up and said, that's all fine and good, but just what is the grain crop going to be this year? This happened by coincidence to be just after the harvest was pretty much gathered...and this guy knew the figure. And CIA and everybody had been dying to get their hands on what this might be, and I recall that it was around 165 million metric tons. He shot it right out, without any ifs, ands, or buts. I reported this back and it got indeed quite some notoriety, because the Department of Agriculture, and as I say the CIA, and everybody else was really keen to know what the Soviet grain crop was going to be that year. So there were some other instances like that where it was something that doesn't sound too earth shaking now.

Q: No, but still that in particularly in a country such as the Soviet Union is very important. Where they're going to go, what they're going to buy. What about your going to the Baltic states? You say we did not recognize the Soviet occupation of those states, but at the same time how did you cover them?

MATTHEWS: Well, it was a very careful minuet. There had been very protracted difficult negotiations leading up to the defining, the agreement on the consular district jurisdictions for Consulate General Leningrad, and Culver Gleysteen had participated in those negotiations, and the embassy in Moscow of course had worked for months on this. This is long before we opened officially, long before I got there. And that formula that they worked out provided that we would not by any means—it explicitly said that nothing in the agreement affects the US non-recognition of the annexation, or the illegal annexation, of the Baltic republics. But, however, and I forget how this was phrased, for the purpose of rendering consular services to—however that was phrased—the capital cities of Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, will be part of the Leningrad consular district. It left unsaid, or left half said, that anything else affecting American, US interests that happened there would have been something to be handled by the embassy in Moscow, again within the constraints of the non-recognition policies. As a practical matter, I would let it be known through the dissident channels that I was constantly in contact with in Leningrad when I was getting ready to

go to one of the three Baltic capitals. They would get the word out to those Refuseniks and others who were outside the capital, and they would come in if they wished, to see me at the hotel, or wherever. These were people who had been refused and felt they had nothing to lose, so they did not mind being seen with me and my KGB army behind me. Their position was they couldn't possibly be delayed any further by such an action and it might help. I think by and large their logic proved to be correct.

Once, because I was with some US scientific delegation, I accompanied them to Vilnius, Lithuania, because they were just private, it wasn't a government delegation. The host, a civilian said, would you like to visit our such and such facility in the city of Kaunas. And, of course, the Americans in the group said, oh, certainly. I just sort of tagged along. I was one of the first US officials to get to Kaunas.

Q: That being what?

MATTHEWS: That being a very old and historic city in Lithuania which was quite unusual in that it was virtually untouched during World War II in terms of any fighting and damage, etc. In fact, a number of the Jewish Refuseniks came from the historic Jewish community of Kaunas, so it was particularly interesting to be able to go there.

Q: Was it technically off-limits?

MATTHEWS: Technically it was a closed area for US officials, which I should have mentioned. The coup, such as it was, came in my being able to tuck in and go to such an area. In Estonia, which is very small, that was the one Baltic country that we could drive to. I think I only did so once because it took so much time, the road was so terrible. But you could actually drive from Leningrad along a very bad road up by the big lake, through Narva, and hence to Tallinn. I usually flew to the other Baltic capitals. I think I took the train a couple of times, but basically flew there.

Q: What about Archangel and Murmansk?

MATTHEWS: At that time it was the odd bit that you had to fly to Arkhangelsk, you could not take the train. Yet you could only take the train, and you could not fly to Murmansk. There was no rhyme or reason to this.

Q: What were they like?

MATTHEWS: Those were raw frontier settings, old, shabby, sagging wooden buildings for the most part, and lots and lots of mud. I think once I did go to Murmansk in the winter, which was definitely to behold. Life was at its outer most difficult I would say in terms of cold, dealing with the elements, and not having much in the way of creature comforts.

Q: In the Leningrad area, I wonder if you could contrast it to Moscow. I'm told in Moscow that all you have to do is go 20 kilometers outside of Moscow and you're back in the 14th century.

MATTHEWS: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Was this also true in the Leningrad district?

MATTHEWS: It was. You did not have to go...I would say probably, especially if you were going up along the Gulf of Finland, that it was more sophisticated by far than what you would have run into outside of Moscow. I well recall on the main road, such as it was, between Leningrad and Moscow, you did not have to go very many miles at all, and women were out thrashing their clothes against rocks in cold streams. That was the washing machine, that was the laundry. And I dare say probably a lot of that goes on to this very day.

Q: What about the area that was taken, the Karelia Peninsula, that was taken away from Finland during the winter war? Was that off-limits, or could you...

MATTHEWS: They were careful about that. I went up there a couple of times by train. You could only see so much by train. I doubt that I was seeing much. I would have seen a huge amount more had I actually done it by car. I think we could only go by train, to Petrozavodsk which is the capital there. And we did not seem to have many Refuseniks from that area. There wasn't much up there. I think that's probably because there wasn't much of a Jewish community up that way.

Q: Most of the people who were refused at that time were ones by immigration were basically Jewish?

MATTHEWS: That's correct. There were some non-Jews, but 90 plus percent were Jewish.

Q: What was the reading on why during this time in the mid-70s the Jewish Soviets wanted to get out?

MATTHEWS: Well, there was tremendous discrimination. I mean, workplace, education, etc. They felt this. I mean, there had been times when it had been perhaps less so. One of the big reasons for being refused, whether it was in fact, or contrived, was that either they or their spouse, or a relative had worked for a factory that came under a regime, which is to say, did classified work. So that would be cited as the most frequent reason for turn-down, and for a second turn-down, and for a third turn-down. Even though in many cases the individual being turned down himself, or herself, had not worked directly for one of these enterprises. To be Jewish and resident of Leningrad in the early '70s was not a recipe for getting ahead in government, business, or commerce.

Q: Was this an official attitude? Or was this reflecting the way the average Soviet citizen would feel?

MATTHEWS: It was definitely official. I would say it's not an either or thing. I mean, going back many years a strain of anti-Semitism exists in Russian society. We had a child born

there. My wife went out to Helsinki to have the baby, our daughter Sarah...by that time we were using the occasional services of a woman, a tank-like figure of a woman who had fought in World War II against the Germans in part of the great siege. She was quite a figure. I well recall, my wife came home from Finland with the new baby Sarah...of course, the lady said, oh, what a wonderful baby, etc., and then she said, tell me, why have you given the child a Jewish name? She wasn't being nasty, it was just part of her make-up. Why would you want to name a child Sarah? As I say, the official treatment of Jews was very poor at that time. That had its reflection in terms of popular attitudes.

Q: What were relations like with the embassy?

MATTHEWS: They were certainly very congenial. One of the wonderful things was that Spike Dubs, my dear friend and former boss when he was director of Soviet affairs, was the DCM down in Moscow during my time in Leningrad. In fact, Spike was charg# for a good period there after I just arrived, and then subsequently Spike left, and Jack Matlock came in as DCM, also a good friend. Then in due course, Walt Stoessel came in as the ambassador. So I tried to get to Moscow periodically, although especially in my third year, I didn't get down as often as I had the first year or two. It was always kind of nice to go down to Moscow, and see my friends at the embassy. We would always invite them to come up and visit us, and some did. My sense was that our embassy officers in Moscow were very busy there...you know, they did travel around the Soviet Union, but they tended not to travel that much to Leningrad.

Q: You were there when Vietnam went down the drain in 1975. How did that hit you?

MATTHEWS: It hit me like a ton of bricks. I was just devastated. Well, first and foremost that the US government, in my view then as now, totally failed to observe any of the promises which we had so boldly made to the Vietnamese back in early '73, because I had personally participated in that. I took it very hard. I would wear occasionally...Soviet functions were always big on people wearing their medals, etc., so occasionally I would

slap on my medals from Vietnam, and everyone was always very understanding. Maybe in Moscow they got more reaction, but none of the Soviet officials in Leningrad, that I recall, were throwing this in our face. They knew I'd been there and some were curious as to what I thought about developments.

Q: Were you getting any reflection about how the Soviets felt about the Poles, the East Germans?

MATTHEWS: It was clear to me that the Soviets knew they had an Eastern European problem. God knows with the Poles, and Hungarians. The Germans, they were virtually an occupation force there because of the huge numbers of Soviet Red Army military stationed there. We had pretty good contacts with the Polish consulate general in Leningrad. I'll never forget 1975 there was a big, big celebration orchestrated from Moscow to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the end of the great patriotic war, World War II we would call it. So all over Leningrad, as all over Moscow and every other place big and small in the Soviet Union, were the Roman numerals, XXX. So my Polish colleague, the Polish consul general, would never pass up the opportunity during this time...an X in Polish, they use the Roman alphabet, is pronounced “Ha”. So he would point to this and say, Ha, do you know what that means? The significance of 30 years of the end of the great patriotic war. Everybody would always bite, no, what does that mean? He'd say, ha, ha, ha. He was not particularly concerned about being overheard by Soviets.

Q: It also signified 30 years of Soviet occupation.

MATTHEWS: Yes. I've often thought about that, and God only knows what Moscow was told by its viceroys in Warsaw, Budapest and all these other places, how much they may have gilded their reporting, etc. But one has to assume the KGB and others kept dibs on what people there really thought about them, which was that they did not think too highly of them.

Q: Did you get any presidential, vice presidential visits while you were there?

MATTHEWS: There was a presidential visit in '74 just before Nixon's resignation, which was just to Moscow. He didn't come up to us in Leningrad. I believe as part of that trip, Henry Kissinger, who of course had made repeated visits to Moscow, both as part of summits with the president, as well as coming in on his own was to visit us. It is said he sometimes in those days did not inform the American embassy of his arrival. But he himself had never been up to Leningrad, and actually did want to see it. So on that occasion in '74, he was to have come. We made elaborate arrangements with full cooperation from Soviet officials in Leningrad, and at the last minute Kissinger stayed on in Moscow to help negotiate whatever deal was pending there, etc., and Nancy Kissinger came up. She was the closest we got to a Secretary of State or what have you at the time. We had numerous other visitors, as I mentioned earlier, usually on the weekends, come up to visit us.

Q: How was family living there?

MATTHEWS: In a way it was very much what you and I might call the old Foreign Service in the good sense. I mean we lived as a community. There were about 25 to 30 Americans stationed at the consulate general. That included the basic contingent of six Marine security guards, plus with our dependents would be another maybe 60 some, 70 all told. We very much thought of ourselves as a family in this challenging new outpost, a sense of mission, etc. I've always remembered that quite fondly. I'm not sure they always have that same #lan and esprit de corps these days, but that's probably my older head speaking. Things always look better the way we were.

Q: You left there in 1976.

MATTHEWS: I left in '76, that's right, which was a great year to have gone through there because that was our 200th birthday party, and we had all kinds of hoopla surrounding

that. It was also the year...well, backing up, 1975 we had the first US Naval ship visit since the end of World War II to Leningrad. The Soviet Union sent one of their navy warships to Boston, as I recall. So that whole year, '75 to '76, was sort of a lot of ceremonial, good stuff here and there. That was also the Apollo-Soyuz, joint space flight between ourselves and the Russians. It was not all grim and bad, etc. I always felt I left at a particular high point.

Q: So where did you go after you left Leningrad?

MATTHEWS: Well, incredibly as so often happened to me in my checkered Foreign Service career, I thought I was going back to the State Department, and I was then asked if I would be the first...at least they told me I would be the first in a new program. I'm not sure in the sequence of things if I was first or second. There was a new program which none of us had ever heard of called the Pearson Program, which was to take Foreign Service officers and assign them to state governments, just to state governments at that time. I think they later widened it to include Congress and all matter of things. But at that point it was to go to work for a state government. To make a long story short, I wound up in Missouri...since Missouri was one of the first states to put itself forward as wishing to have such a strange animal as a Foreign Service officer, and I'm from Missouri, so I wound up going to be Coordinator for International Business Development for the state of Missouri in 1976, and wasn't there more than a few weeks when the director for that quit, and I was made the director for International Business Development, working directly for the governor, and for the head of the Economic Development Division. And what that meant in concrete terms was, Missouri wanted to set up an overseas trade promotion and reverse investment promotion office. So we cited that, we chose to locate in Dusseldorf, Germany, a good central point for the kinds of things that Missouri wanted to do. So most of my year was spent in setting it up, finding the person to head that office, a business person that we settled on after interviewing many, many people. And that actually turned out to be quite a successful undertaking, and I believe now Missouri in addition to that office has at least two or three other offices around the world, including in Tokyo.

Q: What was your impression of state government, and how things ran?

MATTHEWS: Oh, I was very impressed. I thought it was efficient, and of course it strikes you when you go like that, at least to Jefferson City, Missouri, that the bureaucracy is far less onerous than it is on the part of the federal government. And I was particularly fortunate in that Christopher Bond, Kit Bond, was the governor in his first term. He than ran for reelection and was defeated, and so for my last few months there his successor was governor. I didn't have quite the same frequent rapport with him since he was getting himself established and what's being a governor is all about. Kit Bond subsequently, after sitting out a term, ran again, was reelected. You can only serve two terms as governor according to the Missouri constitution, so he was back for his second term. Of course, he's now a US senator and has been for some years. He's a great guy and was very interested in international political issues, as well as, of course, what we were trying to do to stimulate international business for the state of Missouri.

Q: So you're really back in what, '77? You finished in Missouri in '77?

MATTHEWS: It always seems I'm sitting around wondering what next? What is to become of me? The old Foreign Service question mark? And got a call from a wonderful guy, who had just become deputy director of the office of Soviet affairs, my old haunts, Sherrod McCall by name. And Sherrod asked me if I would like to come back and be the officer in charge of the multilateral political relations section, which is the same one, you may recall Stu, where I was one of the Indians some years previously. I immediately, with great alacrity, said yes. I arrived to take up those duties I think on July 1, 1977.

Q: And you did that for how long?

MATTHEWS: I was there for three years.

Q: Until '80.

MATTHEWS: Through '80, and while I was that, I was also special assistant, and then senior special assistant to Marshall Shulman who was the Secretary of State's...Cyrus Vance in this case, special advisor on Soviet affairs. So I was very much involved in the whole playing out of the often quite troubled higher level US-Soviet relationship in the late "70s, which included the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: So you started there in '77.

MATTHEWS: That's correct.

Q: This is the beginning of the Carter administration. What was your impression...a new man on the block, campaign promises. What was the SOV Bureau's view of Carter when he came in?

MATTHEWS: By the time I got there, which was early July of '77, there was a strong sense that the Carter White House was not really very swift in terms of handling international issues in general, and conducting the US-Soviet relationship in particular. A lot of this had to do with what was a very confusing first visit by Secretary of State Vance to Moscow in March of 1977. This is just before I arrived in SOV but the memories were very vivid, plus my whole time was spent playing this out. That first meeting was between Vance and then Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko the famous, if not infamous, long serving Soviet Foreign Minister. There was a White House initiative, dictated by the White House, which Vance put before Gromyko and the Soviet side, a proposal for far ranging arms negotiations across a whole series of issues. In and of itself there was nothing wrong with that, except it was such a big departure from the way things had always been done because previously you were always very careful to prep in advance to say, this is coming. And that wasn't done, and of course Gromyko threw up his hands, and there was great unhappiness and consternation, etc. So Vance came back and everyone regrouped. That's about the time I arrived to actually take up my job there. Interestingly, perhaps even ironically, in the event, everyone did pick themselves up again...and we had a

lot of problems with the relationship in those days, defectors, messy this, messy that. Interestingly, most of those arms control working groups, I believe there were eight, actually began, some not very successfully, to get going. I particularly worked in two of those, anti-satellite weapons negotiations, and conventional arms transfers negotiations. We held several sessions with the Soviet negotiating team.

Q: Let's go back, and then we'll move on to this. We'd had this way of appearing before the Soviets, particularly the equivalent to a Foreign Ministers' meeting, let them know what you're going to talk about. And Vance is an experienced hand. It wasn't as though he were the new boy on the block. He'd been dealing at that level for a long time and as a trouble shooter. Normally your feeling is that you don't want to spring surprises because it doesn't get you anywhere. Everybody has to go back and explore, and essentially one, you can embarrass, and two, you lose time. Why was this done?

MATTHEWS: Well said. As I say, I was told that much of this was dictated by...given to Vance to carry to Moscow at the last minute by the White House. Brzezinski, of course, was the National Security Advisor who obviously would have had a big role in it. In general, as you recall, during that whole Carter administration there were problems, to put it mildly, between the White House and specifically the National Security Council, and the State Department. It was always an uneasy relationship in terms of how the cooperation went between the two bureaucratic entities and the like. That said, it seems to me, given other things going on in the Soviet Union at the time, it's not that we missed any great opportunities that otherwise would have presented themselves.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Brezhnev regime was beginning to dotage, I mean he was getting older.

MATTHEWS: Oh, absolutely. In fact to such an extent that I was involved in the lengthy preparations leading up to the summit meeting between President Carter and Brezhnev in Vienna in early 1979. It was very painful to work these issues because whoever was

doing it at the Soviet embassy here was on a very short string from Moscow. Every word, every change of phrase, had to be checked back because we were pre-negotiating the communiqu#, the joint declaration, etc. But then we got to Vienna and, of course, summits then were a big news. There were hundreds, indeed there were thousands of news people. You don't see this these days because everyone is very blas# about whatever the latest summit meeting may be. But at the first dinner between Carter and Brezhnev, I forget which side hosted first, whether the Soviets did it at their place, or Carter was hosting at our ambassador's residence in Vienna, Brezhnev was so out of it. He was out of it, and this wasn't just an episodic thing. He'd been like this a long time. Whatever the fare was, you can imagine it was a not bad dinner, so he would bring the fork of whatever it was on his plate up toward his face, and more often than not the tines would jab him in the cheek, the chin, and he was in bad shape. It was an embarrassment. And, of course, the Soviet officials were hovering to help with this, help with that. He approached incoherency so you can imagine what the conduct of the plenary sessions was like. They were terrible. It was just an exchange of set piece presentations which Brezhnev could barely mumble. Gromyko, of course, would handle one on one with Vance in terms of the real exchange such as it was. It was very sterile. And then we exchanged views and the two parties signed the pre-agreed joint declaration, and everybody went home.

Q: Did we get any feedback what Carter thought about it?

MATTHEWS: Just, I think, everyone was sort of thinking...this can't go on too much longer. In fact, Brezhnev lasted as we know for a couple more years.

Q: He was there in 1980 at least. He was in Afghanistan.

MATTHEWS: Exactly, it's like carrying this forward just a little bit, not much because it was the end of '79 that they invaded Afghanistan. I would say certainly that in our Kremlinology, and we all fancied ourselves to be practitioners of that science, there was total agreement,

consensus, on the part of everyone that, well, this probably was something that to the extent that it had been run by Brezhnev at all...that the guy was clearly just not with it.

Q: What was the consensus in the Soviet Bureau who was running the store?

MATTHEWS: It seemed to us, and I think we later had reason to confirm this in more recent years when people could actually see Politburo records, that the level just under the General Secretary of the party, and the level or two beneath them, found this very congenial. Because here was el supremo, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in whose name everything was carried out. And basically it left the KGB, the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister and the other powers that be at that level, work out their own arrangements and the people below them also did very well. So you had sort of a structure where everyone thought this was not a bad situation, I mean, from their standpoint. So the central committee functionaries were in the loop doing their thing. The ministry power brokers were able to do their thing. But it was a time of just total stagnation in terms of any initiatives, and God knows any attempts to suggest reforms. It was don't rock the boat, and the boat was sinking.

Q: During this time, before Afghanistan, you're in the multilateral side which you were dealing with, there wasn't a hell of a lot going on, was there?

MATTHEWS: Oh, no, there was a lot happening in the multilateral area. In fact, that's where things were going on because on the bilateral side...that was a pretty frozen piece of tundra. They still had very little immigration. You just had your basic operation. On the multilateral front we had the then already deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. This is before the Soviets moved in, etc. You had problems in the Yemens. You definitely had problems in the Horn of Africa, bad problems, with a very heavy Soviet hand there. And the Angola thing certainly. There was the whole situation to the extent we looked, and we did look, at the Soviet involvement there with Cambodia, Kampuchea, the Vietnamese move into that. There were a lot of perturbations.

Q: Was there the feeling that these are sort of the apparatchik, but rather hard nosed ones who were taking advantage of any situation to expand. Was the feeling that this was, whoever was running the business, was in an expansion mode.

MATTHEWS: Oh, definitely so. In fact, it was very popular in academic circles, Soviet specialists, Russian specialists at the time, I would say perhaps even now as well, to always want to see things in terms of Soviet doves, and Soviet hawks. Those of us who worked continually in these matters day in and day out, night in and night out, tended to see mostly just hawks. We didn't see any doves flying around. So to that extent, even though we all, I think, recognized that Brezhnev was on his last legs one way or the other, there was no sense that had he been a stronger fellow this wouldn't have been happening, or things would be more congenial. I mean, I think the consensus was that the Soviet Union was up to no good in most areas of the world either directly or indirectly. About the best you could say of them, taking the Mid East for example, is that they were essentially interested in playing a spoiler role. In other words, to trip us up in something we were wanting to do. So we took, and I think correctly, a very harsh view of what they were about.

Q: All right, we're sitting there, we have American interests as our responsibility, what were we doing in the various places?

MATTHEWS: We had our own US policies we were pursuing in the various regions, whether that was bilateral diplomacy in a particular country, or often it would be that we were marshaling up diplomatic and other support in regional forums. We were forever demarching the hell out of the Soviets, calling in Ambassador Dobrynin, or sending our ambassador in there. We had an entire flurry of unhappy demarches about this problem, that problem. Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that? Let us not forget Cuba. One particular scandal at the time, which blew up in I think a Washington August which is always a great time for a scandal, was the issue of Soviet MiGs in Cuba. I think it was subsequently ascertained these aircraft had probably been around longer than the

discoverers of them in August of whatever that year was, thought they had been. It was one case of neuralgia after another. And there were also bilateral problems, there were attempted defections of ballet dancers. It was not a happy time. This is all before the invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: Were we watching Afghanistan at that time?

MATTHEWS: Oh we were definitely watching, and in particular my colleagues in the Near East Bureau, NEA, were very, very attuned to that situation because you had the coup in Kabul...I forget the names of the parties involved. The reason I remember this quite well is by that time I was up spending a lot of my 75-hour weeks in Marshall Shulman's office as his special assistant, and we had very frequent briefings I recall from the NEA people, and INR of course, on the developing, unfolding situation in Afghanistan. This was both before, and God knows after the terrible death of Spike Dubs who was assassinated there.

Q: Before we get to that could you tell me a bit about Marshall Shulman. Who he was, and what was his particular role and approach?

MATTHEWS: Marshall Shulman had for many years been a prominent academic, Russian specialist at Columbia University. He had been at Harvard actually well before that, but he had been at Columbia for a good many years, was very well known in academia as a Soviet specialist, wrote in the field, attended conferences of this and that nature, and was also a good personal friend, and had been for many years, of Cy Vance. Accordingly when Carter won the election, the administration was geared up, Vance was named Secretary of State, and Vance turned quickly to ask Marshall Shulman to be his advisor. At first the title and all that was very fuzzy. In fact, Marshall was sort of commuting from New York to Washington. I guess the idea was he would come in and confer great wisdom on the conduct of US-Soviet affairs, and go back to being a professor. This, as we know, in terms of how you view it in the bureaucracy, did not prove to be effective...Marshall quickly saw that this was not the way to wield much influence. So by the time I arrived, July 1, 1977,

in that very few months period Marshall had just moved in full time and had been given the title of special advisor to the Secretary of State on Soviet affairs, and had an office up in mahogany row very near the Secretary's suite. Essentially, you recall in the Kissinger days, we had dear old Hal Sonnenfeldt who was up there in a prominent role. I think Hal actually was the counselor, but he was sort of the guru on East-West issues. For a while you had Tommy Thompson, and people like that who were the big special person on Soviet affairs. So the role that Marshall Shulman was called to play for Cy Vance was not unknown in the State Department. In other words, there had been other great poobahs who showed up to be the super Soviet desk officer, if you will.

In this case, Marshall being the kindly fellow that he is, he went to great lengths not to agitate the bureaucracy, but rather to work as well as congenially as he might. And George Vest was the assistant secretary for European affairs. I was in the office of Soviet affairs, but Marshall knew all of us, and as the months went by more and more I wore two hats. I was the officer in charge of multilateral political relations section of Soviet affairs, and early in the mornings, late at night, and weekends I was Marshall Shulman's special assistant even though he had a couple of other special assistants. So we had a real interlock in terms of making sure that things done at his level, sometimes directly with the Secretary of State, were known to, and assisted by, the office of Soviet affairs. And I might say Marshall was also very good about bringing in the Soviet office division of the INR, Intelligence and Research Bureau. So in that sense he was a unifying and coordinating point. It is no secret, and it has been well described in several books, that Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor, felt that his view of how to handle issues with the Soviet Union was at least as good, and indeed better.

Q: Nothing like having two academics from Columbia.

MATTHEWS: This is true, and in fact this was a running problem. It didn't affect me and my colleagues in terms of the work we did, it was in terms of how the interaction went, mostly with the President. Those of us involved in the trenches were always very busy

as I once said to someone which got into the New York Times. Don't ask me how this was...I think I was out speaking somewhere on US-Soviet affairs, which we did a lot of in those days, and it was good since we went all over the country. I was riding back on an airplane with someone from the New York Times, it may have been Steve Roberts, Cokie's husband, I can't remember for sure. He said, how did I see my role in the conduct of US-Soviet relations? I probably should have drawn myself up, and delivered some great profound thing. I said, and this actually was the actual quote that got into the newspaper story: I said, basically I think of myself as a gunslinger. But in effect, I was, which we were.

Coming to make the point, maybe then we can come back to this. In a very real sense, a very real sense, even though you had the intervening Reagan and Bush administrations, the situation we have now in the Clinton administration where Strobe Talbott came in initially as, if you will, this personage to handle the Soviet and Russian side, and now that he's deputy secretary, there's still someone doing that. What we had during those times has been by and large replicated and made even more formal. I think now the actual office of Russian affairs comes in the wiring diagram under this seventh floor personage, not under the European Bureau.

Q: Russian, and former Soviet affairs. Again, before we get to Afghanistan, I remember sitting next to...was it Thomas Watson who was ambassador, when I was in Naples when we were meeting the CINC South there, and he was telling Admiral Crowe that he was sent by Carter in order to open up better sort of commercial business type relations, and thought we might be able to put things on a better plane. And Jimmy Carter was, particularly before he got disillusioned all over the place, was on a very positive thing, that yes, we can do business with these people. Did you feel prior to the disillusioning process that the President was not being very realistic about the Soviet Union?

MATTHEWS: Yes. I did feel that way, and others felt that way. It was one of the problems, though the President was indeed well intentioned. But one of the problems, as those of us in the trenches perceived it, was that President Carter would give a speech which

would sound great in terms of doing all these things with the Soviet Union, developing relationships, etc. but his next speech—and sometimes with good reason because of the things the Soviet Union had been doing, would be a toughie, or would have those elements in it. I think not by design, but by the way it played out in whatever sequence, let's say five, six speeches he gave, mostly devoted to US-Soviet relations over that period, a two-three year period or whatever it proved to be, you had ying and yang. So it appeared not to be coherent. It appeared not to be consistent. And I'm not one for always adhering to consistency. As I say, a lot of the times the President changed what he was saying because the Soviets had done something egregiously awful. He wouldn't want to be giving a motherhood and chocolate candy talk at that time. But poor Ambassador Watson, the late Tom Watson, who was a terribly kindly man, of great distinction in the business world to say the least, was caught in the middle of all this

Q: From IBM.

MATTHEWS: The son of the founder of IBM and indeed, in his own right, was very successful as CEO, etc. How can I put this? Tom Watson never really knew what was happening in the sense that he arrived wanting to do good things. And he was sent with that mandate from the President, and he solemnly felt that he had that, and I think he felt he had it from Cy Vance too. I don't mean to suggest any problems there. But he had no sooner arrived in Moscow than the downward spiral of the relationship, culminating in their invasion of Afghanistan, rendered it totally ludicrous that he could seek any amelioration of the relationship. So his whole tenure, which was relatively brief, was not a happy one. And he was often, by the way, back in the US on either vacation or consultation. So his was not, unfortunately, a memorable ambassadorship.

Q: I'm thinking it might be a good point to quit at this point. And to put in at the end that we're going to pick up that you were in the Soviet Bureau, we're talking first about the assassination of Spike Dubs and how because of Soviet complicity, or appearance thereof, and how we viewed it, and then about events in Afghanistan.

MATTHEWS: That's right, and our time frame here will be '79 and '80 leading up to the presidential election here in 1980, etc. So this probably is a good juncture to...

Q: I'd like to go into that...

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Q: Today is the 10th of September 1996. Gary, let's start. You're in the Soviet Bureau.

MATTHEWS: The European Bureau Office of Soviet affairs.

Q: How did we view events, I mean there were a series of steps in Afghanistan in that period. Well, maybe you can explain what had happened at this time, as you saw it.

MATTHEWS: As I recall, we checked the date of that assassination as we were leaving the last time, and Spike's assassination took place in February of 1979, and I believe we also talked earlier about the whole period in '77, and certainly '78, when the US-Soviet relationship was in a downward spiral for a number of reasons. There were problems in the bilateral relationship, there were things which the Soviet Union was doing in the various world regions. I think we mentioned the Horn of Africa. We mentioned things in our own hemisphere, and Eastern Europe and what have you. And, of course, the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan which I must say the Near East Bureau, NEA, had been very much on top of early on, and those of us working in Soviet affairs of course had paid very close attention as well. Against that background, it was so singularly shocking to have an area where we were already evincing considerable concern produce an assassination of one of our most distinguished, and indeed beloved, colleagues, Spike Dubs, who had been in Soviet affairs in a number of capacities, both in Washington as well as serving as deputy chief of mission and Charg# in Moscow. And then Spike had come back and as I recall he had been a diplomatic in residence, and then went into the NEA

Bureau as a deputy assistant secretary. I mention all of this because that was preparatory to his going on assignment as ambassador to Afghanistan.

Q: When you heard about the assassination, how did it hit the Bureau?

MATTHEWS: It was just devastating for the whole Department. In fact, I remember this vividly because that was a weekend where the Washington area had been hit by an enormous snowstorm, blizzard, it was one of those real humdingers not unlike ones we had this past winter. It was nigh impossible to get in from the suburbs. As I recall, there were a couple of other bad things happening at the same time. I believe, for example, Vietnam had invaded Cambodia at pretty much the same time. So there was a lot going on. I lived then as now in McLean, and I remember I called to the NSC sitroom, and they were sending a snowplow to pick up Zbig Brzezinski, the President's National Security Advisor. I thought I had made arrangements that I could hop on the plow as it passed a certain point in McLean but needless to say when I stood out there a while it became clear that I had been passed by.

Q: The plow had passed you by.

MATTHEWS: The plow had passed me by, such is life. So I remember walking in, taking some time to accomplish that. And despite the storm a number of people had made their way in. As I recall, I remember sleeping on a sofa in the office of the Department for at least a couple of nights, trying to deal with all of this. There were exchanges with our embassy in Moscow, talking, of course, with the Soviet authorities because of the involvement of Soviet security people in trying, they said, to resolve the hostage taking.

Q: I've talked to people who were there who have raised the question of not ineptitude, but complicity. In fact, Bruce Flatin raised the question of perhaps the Soviet security, the KGB type, or something had actually killed Dubs.

MATTHEWS: It was never clear. The circumstances were very confusing and murky, there was a lengthy investigation, a very thick after action report which amounted to a compendium of everything known and suspected about it. And as I recall, some months later, no one ever made a definitive conclusion. But there was shooting. We know that there were Soviet security people present with the Afghan security types who said they were trying to resolve the kidnaping, the hostage taking. But gunfire broke out, and it was always very unclear as to the exact circumstances.

Q: What was the initial reaction in the Department, particularly Soviet affairs? Did you suspect that this might be a rogue KGB operation. What were you thinking?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, there were various lines of speculation. Of course, Afghanistan, and Kabul in particular, very tumultuous at the time in terms of plots, counter plots between factions within Afghanistan, the Red Flag faction one that I recall, versus some others. And the Soviets backing their people. There was just really no way to know definitively. I think everyone was so shocked that this had happened, particularly to a dear friend and colleague. But against the background of the upheavals in Afghanistan, and the very clear Soviet involvement, coups and counter coups. I would say at that time there was a growing consensus among those of us working, certainly in the trenches in US-Soviet affairs, that the Soviet Union was making a major power grab toward that region. So in that context the murder of Spike Dubs was seen as all the more alarming, and disturbing. And certainly no one ever dismissed the possibility that you mentioned just a moment ago, that indeed the KGB, the Soviet authorities, could have been more actively involved in the actual murder.

Q: Did you have the feeling at the time...I may have asked this question but we can always excise it if I have. Who was in charge of the Soviet Union at this time?

MATTHEWS: It was already in that period when Brezhnev was, if not in his dotage, at least he was not able to play an active role at all in terms of normal top leadership

functions. That said, this had existed for some years as his health, pace of activity, declined. There had emerged a fairly stable collective leadership of those just under him, the power ministries, the foreign affairs, the security organs, the defense ministries, the related movers and shakers. Certainly there was no doubt on anyone's part that the KGB exercised immense influence at the time, both internally because there was horrendous repression, cracking down against Soviet Jews and other dissidents, including artists in the Soviet Union. And I believe I am correct also in terms of the kinds of operations which the KGB was mounting abroad in various world regions, not just there in Afghanistan. The intelligence assessment on the part of the State Department, and I believe the CIA and other organizations as well in the intelligence community, was that the KGB enjoyed a fairly free hand to mount operations and swing its weight around. So that added certainly extra levels of concern over the murder of Dubs.

Q: Were there other places in the world where you saw the...I won't say the fine hand of the KGB, but rather heavy hand, of KGB operations of destabilizing, or the equivalent?

MATTHEWS: There were indeed. In fact I think I mentioned the Horn of Africa, and there you had a pretty heavy and quite noticeable and provable hand on the part of the Soviet Union, KGB, and military intelligence as well. The same was the case in the Yemens at that time always to-ing and fro-ing, North Yemen and South Yemen—today it's just one Yemen. At that time that was an area of perturbation. They were certainly up to doing all manner of things here in our hemisphere, the Sandinistas—that was just beginning to get underway, certain other guerrilla movements that they supported. That was also the period when, of course, Cuban forces were present in large numbers in Angola.

Q: And also were they in the Horn of Africa?

MATTHEWS: They were also present in the Horn of Africa. I remember writing a number of papers pointing out the problem was not just one of Soviet arms, but of Cuban legs carrying those arms. So it wasn't just sitting back on the part of intelligence analysts

positing a worst case scenario. I mean there really were tangible things you could see the Soviet Union doing, and their hand was very present in the cookie jar. This wasn't a matter of conjecture.

Q: There was the feeling, at least announced by the Soviets, and often used by the strong anti- communist within the United States, that the Soviet Union was on the march, and the Soviet Union represented the future. How was the Bureau looking at this?

MATTHEWS: The Bureau, both in my previous assignment in Soviet affairs in the late "60s, as well as during this assignment in the mid and late "70s, had always quite consistently taken a pretty hard view of what the Soviets were about because we were dealing with this as part of our daily platter of issues. There were those, and certainly prominent in academia, there were others perhaps here and about in some places in government, who tended to concentrate, very excessively in the view of us who worked in Soviet affairs as professionals, concentrated too much on trying to distinguish between hardliners and softliners in the Kremlin. And frankly most of the professionals did not discern any great body of territory between hardliners and softliners, and without any doubt Soviet disinformation which was quite active and reasonably good at the time as a matter of fact, played to that. I mean it was part of the Soviet peace campaign, overtures towards scientists and academics. But I would have to say responding directly to what you posed, that those in the United States who wished to present a very harsh view of the Soviet Union were given a lot of material to work with, and really didn't have to gild any lilies in my view, particularly during that period of time.

Q: How did we see the Soviet Union's control over what was known as its satellites, or whatever you want to call it, Eastern Europe at that time?

MATTHEWS: We saw that they were reasserting a stronger pattern of control during that period. And this manifested itself, as I recall, mostly in terms of our intelligence assessments that they were doing more together with the intelligence services of certain

members of the Warsaw Pact, and some of those nations—East Germans, Poles, Czechs—ran pretty active intelligence operations in conjunction with the KGB at the same time.

Q: Were we monitoring particularly what later turned out within ten years to be major cracks in the Soviet Union? Those were the various nationalities, were we looking at that? Or did we see this at all significant?

MATTHEWS: We were certainly looking very intensely at it. As I mentioned a moment ago, it was a period of particular repression, repression of Soviet Jews, of other human rights activists of any stripe practically, and goodness knows in the Baltic states there was severe repression there. So we were very aware of the expressions of nationalist sentiment, and of the discontent that prevailed. But the KGB, not just externally, but certainly internally, seemed to exercise an extremely iron hand at the time.

Q: We may have covered some of this, so if its duplicating again we might have to pick out the best expression. But we're moving now towards close to the last two years, and this is the third year of the Carter administration, and Jimmy Carter had come in with ideas that maybe if we showed Christian understanding, and were forthcoming, nice things could happen despite the fact we had a National Security Advisor who knew in his Polish heart that the Russians were always evil. Were you as the working officer, and the people around you, seeing a maturing of the Carter administration and getting a little more practical maybe about the situation?

MATTHEWS: It became more practical. Unfortunately, you're right I think in your characterization of how he came in to office by thinking good thoughts, and doing good deeds, hoping that in Moscow they would see the logic of this and be brought along, and the hardliners would be shoved aside, the hawks would be put down, the doves would be ascendant. That had pretty much eroded certainly by '79, and I would say probably by '78. President Carter gave a number of speeches. I recall there always used to be intense interest as to what kind of a speech would he be giving this time on the subject of US-

Soviet affairs. There was always great analysis, not unlike the science of Kremlinology where we studied the pronouncements of the Soviet leaders to see whose line was being predominantly reflected. Of course, as Soviet behavior became ever more egregiously challenging, and events disturbing, then it naturally tended to become more a situation where the competition was keenly felt.

Q: Did you find that there was almost a natural fit between the National Security Council with Brzezinski who was highly suspicious of the Russians, Soviets as plain Russians, and the European Bureau Soviet affairs which had been watching this crackdown, and didn't really think pleasant thoughts about the Soviets, certainly at this period. Did you find that you were almost in a certain alliance against other forces that were trying to make it sound better, had a more rosy view, or not?

MATTHEWS: We certainly worked congenially with our colleagues at the National Security Council, and I knew all the Soviet specialists there at the time, and we cleared things back and forth. Cy Vance was Secretary of State, and as I mentioned Marshall Shulman was his special advisor on Soviet affairs. And Marshall had been certainly among those who felt that we could craft, we could shape, a more constructive US-Soviet relationship by giving it more centrality. I think he was certainly right on giving it more centrality, but it often suffered from either too much attention, or too little attention, and has not had the consistency that it deserved, especially during the more confrontational dangerous period when you needed a lot of centrality in my view. But again, it's the pattern of Soviet behavior, certainly their invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79, which worsened relations.

Q: How did that hit us? I mean, just prior to, and when it happened, what was our analysis, and how were we reacting?

MATTHEWS: Things had been deteriorating, of course, in Afghanistan for a good while going back to the beginning of '79, with, of course, Spike Dubs' assassination, and before

that with the coups and the plotting, etc. that the KGB was very directly involved in. When the actual invasion was mounted that was not just the straw that broke the camel's back, that was a whole heap of firewood that landed on the camel. That wrote the finish, absolutely finish, to any and all attempts to create, or recreate—whatever verb you want to use—a more productive, cooperative US-Soviet relationship. Thereafter for the remainder of 1980 up through the election—through the end of the Carter administration—there were almost no cooperative, and few pleasant components of the US-Soviet relationship. That behavior, their invasion, was seen as confirmation, corroboration of, if you will, the evil empire, which by the way was a perception that existed well before President Reagan's coining of that phrase after he had become president.

Q: Thomas Watson was the ambassador there. What sort of reports were we getting out of there during this period?

MATTHEWS: Thomas Watson was a very kind man, and I think we talked a little bit in one session, that he had had, of course, an imminently successful career as head of IBM, having succeeded his father in that undertaking and further expanding it, making it into even more of a prosperous and successful company. But Tom Watson had an idealistic view of the Soviet Union from the days when he was a pilot ferrying lend lease and other goods to the beleaguered Russians, Soviet forces, etc. and he remembered that very vividly, as well he might have because he, I think, endured much danger and hardship, and was really in the thick of things at that time. And he hoped very much, and he hoped that the hallmark of his tenure as ambassador would be the creation, or at least to be present if not creating it, this more constructive, less confrontational relationship. And, in the event, quite the contrary. It was perhaps the most confrontational period we had had between us and the Soviet Union since the days of Berlin and all of that. It was not a happy tenure.

Q: What were we getting from the embassy? Was what we were getting from the embassy more or less in sync with what the Soviet office was seeing? And also, what was it? I mean was there any difference, and if there was, what was it?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, that was already well into the period where, of course, we received embassy Moscow reporting cables, and we received their analysis including personal assessments from the ambassador. Then, and certainly as now, we relied more on our own analysis from Washington and I don't mean just the State Department, but CIA, Defense Department, the White House, wherever it might be. The despatches, the cables that would come in from embassy Moscow...I don't mean that they were disregarded or seen as unimportant, but my sense, and I've reflected on this a bit in the intervening years, my sense is that they felt very hard pressed just to cope with the deteriorating relationship. And more often than not, the embassy was in the position of having to march in almost every other day with a demarche protesting, or complaining, or asking for clarification, on our instructions from Washington. Most of the reporting stemmed from that as opposed to big think pieces about whither US-Soviet relations.

Q: What role, from your point of view, the feeling that the Soviet embassy played here in Washington?

MATTHEWS: Well, of course, Anatoly Dobrynin had been already the long-serving Soviet ambassador here, and those of us, professionals particularly, who worked in Soviet affairs always resented the access and the influence, and the power that the Soviet ambassador had here in Washington. Of course, a lot of this went back to the Kissinger era, but it extended up through the time we're talking about here. When our ambassador in Moscow had a hard time getting in to see the assistant librarian at the Lenin Library, everything there had to be approved by this committee, this official, and when you did get in to see a Soviet official, it was usually a very sterile exchange. Here, of course, Dobrynin for

years had been very adept at cleverly getting in to see the president of the United States, privately I might add, anytime he wanted to raise his little finger. We really resented...

Q: What happened after the December '79 invasion of Afghanistan? Could you describe the reaction of the Carter administration, and what were you all tasked with responses, and that sort of thing?

MATTHEWS: There were heavy demarches over a protracted period of time.

Q: Before we go to the reactions from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, something I don't believe we've covered would be the June 1979 US-Soviet summit held in Vienna. Could you talk about that?

MATTHEWS: ...between Soviet leader Brezhnev and President Carter. Throughout 1978 and intensively into early 1979, the US and Soviet negotiators had been working very intensively on the SALT II strategic arms limitations treaty number two agreement which dealt with a number of thorny issues concerning strategic weaponry of both sides. All of this negotiation took place against the background of what we'd been talking about which is a downward spiral in the overall relationship. This is very important that we come to this because it always seemed to me then, as it certainly has always seemed to me since, that when we were talking about those who said we should negotiate more with the Soviet Union, that we should be less harsh, should encourage their doves, etc, that almost all of them turned instinctively, and solely, if I may add, to arms control as the little engine that could pull the rest of the US-Soviet relationship. I always believed then that that was a flawed view. It was the tail trying to wag a dog when the dog was becoming much too large. And, in fact, it does seem to me that was the problem. There were good reasons on both sides why the SALT II treaty was seen as important and that we carried forward, came to the agreement, and had the summit meeting to ratify it, but the subsequent virtual total crash of overall US-Soviet relations proved the point that no amount of arms control, including an important treaty on strategic arms, could carry the otherwise decaying corpse,

to put it starkly, of the overall US-Soviet relationship. All that said, I wanted to make that point.

The process leading up to the actual summit was very intensive. I was charged to work on it together with Bob Barry, who was the deputy assistant secretary in the European Bureau responsible for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We were negotiating the joint declaration, communiqu# or whatever you want to call it, which would be signed by the two chiefs of state, Brezhnev as head of the Soviet Union, Carter as our president, that would reflect the summit results. So that was worked back and forth very carefully, each word with a magnifying glass, etc. And it became evident as we got actively into that undertaking in late '78, particularly early '79, with all the other negative things happening in the relationship, that this communiqu#, this joint declaration, was going to be not very much. In other words, I think the original thought had been that it would have mentioned lots of initiatives agreed by the two presidents, that we will cooperate more in this area, we will do more in that. But by the time in Washington, where we were doing this, we came to the agreed text, as I recall, it was not changed even in one word once the illustrious ones convened in Vienna and blessed it. It was basically just a short communiqu#, joint declaration, that did little more than take note of the signing of the SALT II treaty.

I remember vividly that we tried to get the Soviet side to agree to a statement in the joint declaration that neither side strives for military superiority. The Soviet side refused. This was the subject of a lot of to-ing and fro-ing back and forth and the Soviets were not comfortable putting this into the document. So that's yet another indication of what we're talking about here. The actual summit meeting, which I attended coming over on Air Force One with the president, as usual the large accompanying party, was certainly in the history of US-Soviet summitry I imagine the most bizarre in several respects. Brezhnev, who of course was not doing well in general anyway, was in a very down period. Our intelligence people assumed that he was not always himself, obviously taking a lot of medication. There were several bizarre instances. But one of them was, at the official dinner, and I can't remember if it was the Soviets hosting it at their place, or President Carter hosting it

at our ambassador's residence in Vienna. Whatever the cuisine, the food that was actually being served, Brezhnev would take his fork laboriously, raise up whatever it was, and more often than not the fork would go into the side of his cheek, and you can imagine what was lacking in terms of the repartee back and forth. Basically he had to have Foreign Minister Gromyko at his shoulder and other aides answering for him more often than not. That was the great summit of Vienna in 1979.

Q: Did you get any feel about how Carter reacted when all of a sudden brought up against the reality of who was the Soviet ostensible leader?

MATTHEWS: We all knew, and I think Carter certainly appreciated even before the summit that we were well into the leadership succession of the Soviet Union. Although I think we talked about it last time, Brezhnev went on to last another almost two years. It was incredible, and he became ever more of a vegetable as I recall. It certainly confirmed us in our view that, we were talking about the Soviet Union essentially ruled by a committee of people...Brezhnev had to keep himself alive somehow, and the folks beneath him found it comfortable to continue to exercise power in his name, etc.

Q: As we were looking at this, obviously we're trying to figure out who is going to take over. What were we thinking?

MATTHEWS: Well, I think, our Kremlinology proved to be pretty good. In the end I think we wound up being right among our short list of candidates we felt would replace Brezhnev...they all wound up replacing him because each then died one after the other. We thought that Andropov, who was then the head of the KGB, and obviously a man of some influence, would stand a very good chance of becoming the General Secretary of the Communist Party as the top guy. Although Brezhnev had taken on all manner of titles in those last few years, Marshall of the Soviet Union, grand poobah of whatever. His administrative assistant who had worked himself up mostly by being a good staff aide, was Chernenko, and in fact, Chernenko, when Brezhnev finally did die, managed to get

himself chosen as the one to be general secretary simply because I think he was such a dull, unchallenging piece of blah. So much of the same situation continued to apply. He was virtually incapable of doing anything on his own. So then he died, and then Andropov took over, and then following him of course the now much aligned Mikhail Gorbachev.

Q: You were in the Soviet office from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From the summer of '77 through early '81.

Q: Did you get involved in sitting down and figuring out how to be beastly to the Soviets? We were cutting out wheat, and I was wondering if there was a think tank of how can we stick it to the Soviets.

MATTHEWS: Oh, very definitely. In fact, as officer in charge of the multilateral political relations section I was charged with drawing up a so-called hit list of sanctions we wanted to look at to impose on the Soviet Union in punishment for its invasion of Afghanistan. That's the one you're referring to? And this was a very interesting experience. I was no stranger to hit lists. The Soviets had done egregiously awful things, in human rights, or whatever it might be. So we had gone to the trough before, you know, suspending Aeroflot landing rights, etc, there was a lot of nutsy-boltsy stuff like that. You could even do things with travel restrictions. But it was mostly minor stuff. So this, of course, was the big Kahuna, the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan. They seemed to be on the march, rampant, heading for God knows where, warm waters, heading towards the Persian Gulf. So as you might imagine we had all manner of entities contributing their ideas for a hit list. I recall receiving an NSC memo which had a bunch of stuff on it, and we had worked up options. Well, I don't want to sound immodest, but as sometimes happens, as often happens when there is a great crisis, everyone gets very tired; one person who is less tired than the others is asked to do something. I remember well, we had all been working for weeks on what the hell we should do to show the Soviet Union that by God, they weren't going to get away with doing this without getting whacked back some way

somehow. So, everyone was very tired putting in 20-hour work days. It was a Saturday afternoon and I and everyone was sitting around, and we had all this stuff, and we got the word from the office of the Secretary of State, Mr. Vance, that he wished to have a meeting early the next morning because he in turn was going over to meet with the President where they would actually decide what we would do. In other words, the actual sanctions would be decided upon. I remember staying until very late Saturday night, 11:00, 12:00, 1:00 in the morning, whatever it was. And at this point I couldn't do this on the basis of any committee because the clock was ticking, and things were actually going to happen. So I took all this stuff, and there were dozens of things that people had contributed that we could whack them here, or we could do this, but most of it was just, as I say, penny ante stuff. I separated it into two columns. One was a very short column, it had maybe five, six, eight things on it. The other one had maybe 20-30-40 things, who knows, on airport landing rights, on how we could deny them the sale of can openers under export control, add that to the list, etc. But also on the list, which I think had come from on high and wasn't generated necessarily by us, was the grain embargo, canceling participation in the Olympics, and there was one other that was of some consequence. I can't remember what that third one was. It may come to me because I think I have a note or two on this somewhere. So I drew up this memo, I guess maybe George Vest was the assistant secretary for European affairs, and a few others were going to be there, and I was invited to be present at the meeting with Secretary Vance also early Sunday morning before he went over to the White House. Well, Cyrus Vance was, and is, one of the kindest human beings you'll ever meet in your life. He never raised his voice, and God knows he never used any profanity or untoward language at all, and had great equanimity. We all admired him greatly for this. His office had received a copy of my memo which by the way was not changed. It's amazing, it's one of the few things I ever wrote, particularly going to high levels, that was not changed. I guess everyone was just too tired. So we get in the Secretary of State's conference room, on a Sunday morning, at an early hour. And he's been looking through the memo, and everybody is sitting around there, about eight or ten of us, whatever it was, and to our shock, we all almost fell out of our chairs, the Secretary

of State says: you know, I've looked through all of this stuff, there are all these things...and he referred to the long list, and he said, that's all just, excuse me, “chicken shit”. Cy Vance was not one to say anything like this. And, he said, there are only three things on here that will really get the Soviets' attention: grain embargo, canceling participation in the Olympics, and this third one that I can't think of. And he went over to the White House, and those were the three that were adopted.

Q: So a whole generation of American athletes can curse you.

MATTHEWS: Well, I think not for being the originator of the idea. This had surfaced elsewhere early on as to how in the world we could respond.

Q: For the record, the 1980 Olympics in the summer were going to be held in Moscow.

MATTHEWS: Yes. To recap, my role was to segregate all the penny ante options, to use a kinder term, from the several significant ones. There were another maybe four or five in addition to the three, but these were distinctly the three where Moscow would sit up and take notice.

Q: Did you get involved in the efforts to sell what we were doing to other countries, keep them out of the Olympics, not sell grain?

MATTHEWS: I was involved in it. There was one officer as I recall who took the lead in coordinating all the intense diplomatic activity to get other countries also not to attend the Olympics, etc. My office was closely involved in it, mostly just keeping track of what was going on. We didn't ourselves take the lead in doing the demarches.

Q: We started getting into this posture of confrontation. Nothing passes unnoticed in the Soviet Union, they usually come back at us. Were we seeing other things happening to us?

MATTHEWS: 1980 was essentially a marking time period. We had the unfolding of our boycott of the Olympics. We had the onset of the grain embargo. Essentially the US-Soviet cooperative relationship shut down.

Q: And you had the election in the states too.

MATTHEWS: We had the election in the states, and then of course everything went into suspended animation. And I recall that as being a period when there was not a lot going on. There was another flap over the presence of Soviet MiGs in Cuba during one of those summers, but that was just part of the list of perturbations that I referred to. The big one was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing reaction. The Soviet propaganda machine for its part, of course, retaliated, or responded, that all this stuff that the United States was cranking up, the sanctions etc., was no more than what we had wanted to do to beat them about the head and shoulders all the time, and that it was just evidence of the anti-Soviet malicious attitude on the part of the United States.

Q: What did we find the world reaction was? Both the Soviet invasion, and our counter moves.

MATTHEWS: As I recall we were fairly pleased with the reaction we got from most of our allies. I mean, the non-aligned movement was shaky and flaky as so often in those matters. In the Mid-East itself you had, of course, the attitudes which were more a function of the Arab-Israel problems than they were of this. But I recall that most of our key allies, not all NATO by any means, were in fact alarmed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and concerned that it portended a more assertive move into the Gulf region, or could, not that it necessarily did, but that it could.

Q: What were we getting both from the embassy, from the CIA, and other agencies. At that time, during the aftermath up until you left, until '81, any disquiet in the Soviet Union from whatever passes for public opinion, even sub rosa public opinion.

MATTHEWS: I don't recall our ever coming by any of that at the time. Later on, of course as we know, there were manifestations of discontent once the Soviets started incurring considerable casualties. But back then, adding of course to the alarm in general, in helping the US case it wasn't too long after they went in with the initial force of troops, that they began adding to their force strength by deploying large combat forces.

Q: Did you find things heating up as far as what we were doing during the 1980 period as the election came up. You had Ronald Reagan who represented at least in the context in those day about as far right a candidate, strongly anti-Communist as you could get in the mainstream political system, and seeing the Carter administration trying to up the ante. Did you feel the political tug?

MATTHEWS: Well, of course, we were very aware of it. You had team A, team B, certainly foreign policy played...

Q: What was team A, team B?

MATTHEWS: There was an effort mounted to show that a basic, overall intelligence estimate of Soviet intentions was too relaxed as to what the Soviets were about. It might have been by the Committee on the Present Danger, I can't recall. I know they were very active in doing things which were picked up by the Reagan campaign of 1980. The foreign policy issues in general played a much more prominent role in that election campaign than goodness knows it did here four years ago, and much more than now. Speaking as one who was in the trenches, one of the gunslingers, we felt we had our hands full just trying to deal with the ins and outs of what was happening in US-Soviet relations.

Q: When did you leave Soviet affairs?

MATTHEWS: The election, of course, was in November, and I had earlier been assigned as DCM, deputy chief of mission, to Helsinki, and had wanted badly to go because it was near and dear to my heart, and I had spent a lot of time in Finland over the years. Also, the

US ambassador in Finland was Jim Goodby, an outstanding Foreign Service Officer with whom I had worked on many European security issues. Jim had asked me to be his DCM and I was honored and delighted. But fate intervened. I stayed on, and wound up not going to that assignment, staying on to be a continuity link as the senior special assistant to Marshall Shulman who was still working in the capacity of special advisor to the Secretary of State on Soviet affairs. The Secretary of State at that point was Ed Muskie because Vance by then had resigned over the abortive Iran rescue mission. The other thing in the background of all this, speaking of other perturbations, goodness knows was the Iranian hostage...

Q: By the way, in the Iranian thing did we see the Soviet hand there at that time?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, there were strong suspicions that they were very happy to see us in that situation, further sticking it to us over that. So the Helsinki position came and went as it were. I think the director general notified me that I was selected for the Senior Seminar...obviously after the election I was going to self-destruct, and had been at that point already another three-four years—three and a half, in Soviet affairs again. So I got an assignment to the Senior Seminar which I was going to do. Then fate again intervened. President-elect Reagan asked Alexander Haig to be his Secretary of State, Haig among other phone calls he made at the time, called Walter Stoessel with whom he had worked closely in the Nixon years when Walt was deputy assistant secretary for European affairs, later assistant secretary, etc. Walter had been the ambassador in Moscow when I was in Leningrad. At that point Stoessel was serving as our ambassador to Bonn, Germany. So Haig called Stoessel and asked him to become Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and I got a call from Walt Stoessel asking if I would be his executive assistant in that capacity. So the Senior Seminar went out the window, and I wound up present at the transition between the Carter and the Reagan administrations, and all that then ensued.

Q: Why don't we talk about this transition period? We're talking about January 20th, 1981, because some transitions just are kind of transitions. But this one was a set of true

believers on one side being replaced by true believers on the other side, in a certain extent in foreign policy. Or by that time disillusioned true believers on one side.

MATTHEWS: Perhaps, although within the State Department it was obviously mostly the political appointees...

Q: I'm talking about the impact of the political appointees. From your perspective how did things go?

MATTHEWS: I thought it went fairly smoothly. The transition teams had done their usual preparation of mammoth books that no one was ever going to read. Every transition team does this. You know, you kill thousands of trees to produce these briefing books, and that happened once again. But it had the beneficial effect, it seemed to me at that point, because some of those people we got to know, and they took positions here and there in the Department, and in some of the other national security agencies. I remained present in my office...it did not hurt that the office where I was, a nice office I might add, overlooking the monuments, mahogany, etc., was given to Walter Stoessel to be his transition office, before he had his confirmation hearings and moved into the big, big office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. So my memories of the morning of January 20, 1981...actually I guess I should say 12:01 p.m., were footsteps of the aides to Secretary-designate Haig coming down the inner corridor to see who was around, and putting up little signs as to who was going to be where. I did not suffer any indignities because it was already decided that our space would be Stoessel's, and it was known that I would be Stoessel's executive assistant. But it did not take the new team very long to settle itself into place. Of course, everyone had to go through confirmation hearings, so they were in designate status. And you had the Secretariat, of course, operating as point of transition, and very effectively so I might say during that period.

Q: The one place where the transition was almost a hostile transition and this was in ARA, American affairs. Did you have any perspective on that?

MATTHEWS: I was privy to some of that, yes.

Q: What was the reaction? Who were some of the people involved in this?

MATTHEWS: Well, I guess it suffices to say that it was felt at the highest levels of the incoming new group that changes needed to be made and would be made particularly in that area. One experience I have always recalled. Secretary Haig held an initial meeting in his conference room with all the acting assistant secretaries and other top officials, in other words people the who were Department officials in the Clinton administration, many of them career people. Many were in acting status because the political appointees had already left. But I'll certainly never forget that Haig made some initial remarks which were what you'd expect, about his high regard for the State Department, the Foreign Service, the good work they do. But I certainly shan't forget that he went on then to add, as he looked around the room at the 30-some odd folks sitting around in the large conference table, and the chairs behind the table. He said, it is the case, however, that a number of you, and all of you have served with great distinction-.a number of you have been, not of your own choosing, very close to the flame, and some of you will be replaced as is normal when there is a change of administration, etc. So in that context, as you mentioned, some of the colleagues in Latin American affairs area were replaced. But I have to go on and say they were also replaced in the European Bureau and almost every place else. This was not a case of this being confined to ARA.

Q: How did Al Haig strike you when he came on board?

MATTHEWS: Well, he was and is a very impressive person. I was used to, well, I'll put it this way, the genteel ways of Cy Vance, and to a certain extent Ed Muskie who I always felt was a great guy. He could get kind of upset in private, Muskie could, but I didn't see that side of him. Haig is a very emotive type of guy. You don't ever have to wonder how Haig is feeling about a given matter. Haig's conversation, if one was present at a meeting with him, was very expressive in language, gestures, mannerism. The team around him

had some really great people on it, I must say. They were sort of used to this approach. It was such a change, a departure for me in the sense that when you think of Cy Vance, or Muskie, or Dean Rusk—I remember him very fondly, I was in the operations center and would take things to him, it was a very major, careful, quiet response. With Haig it was more of an immediate thing. He would order up action, send his troops there, send his troops here, and there was always a lot of ferment, and dashing around. So the 7th floor operation of the Secretary of State was a much more frenetic, if I may use that word, state of life that was the case of any other Secretary of State I have worked for.

Q: You were working for the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from when to when?

MATTHEWS: Walt Stoessel got back very soon after the inauguration...the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs is formally the number three of the Department. Bill Clark who was President Reagan's very good friend, was chosen to be Deputy Secretary of State. There was a long period before he was confirmed, and Walt was acting Deputy Secretary, and Haig had already started traveling here and there, so Walt was often acting Secretary of State. So I was literally thrown into the fray, handling items for President Reagan and all manner of other things that normally wouldn't land on our doorstep so soon and so ferociously. In fact, the whole time when Stoessel was Under Secretary, even after Bill Clark was confirmed, we were really in the thick of things. There was really nothing that Haig was doing that we weren't very much involved in.

Then at the end of '81 there were various problems and they would call at the White House, specifically those people who were the National Security Advisor.

Q: Richard Allen.

MATTHEWS: Richard Allen for a while, and suddenly, whatever the reasons, the President chose Bill Clark, who was Deputy Secretary, to be the National Security Advisor. And the President asked Stoessel to move up and become Deputy Secretary. That was around

early '82 or thereabouts, so we moved down mahogany row, and that brought even extra work because by then Haig who was having periodic problems with the White House, as he perceived it, was traveling on various and sundry missions...Stoessel once totaled it up and he had been acting Secretary for some incredible number of instances which, of course, meant a lot more burden on the Deputy Secretary, and, I might add, on me and our staff.

Q: How did you all accommodate to William Clark, known as Judge Clark, who came as a very close friend of the President from California but with no real foreign affairs experience. I guess he was put there to keep an eye on Al Haig probably.

MATTHEWS: That's the rep, but I have to say that at that point, and I know this for a fact, Haig came, and quickly so, to rely on Bill Clark, and to appreciate him for carrying his water vis a vis the higher ups at the White House—Meese, Baker, Deaver, the President himself for that matter. Bill Clark and Walt Stoessel had a very congenial relationship. So from my standpoint, it was also congenial, and of course I had a lot to do with his executive assistant who was a really nice guy, Richard Morris I think, and some of the other people working in there. So we had no problems, there were no turf spats over who was going to do what in terms of the principals. Coming a bit forward, though we don't want to go there quite yet, after Clark moved over to become the National Security Advisor with Admiral Poindexter as his deputy as I recall, there developed a less than congenial relationship between Secretary Haig and Judge Clark, and that culminated in Haig's resignation in June of 1982.

Q: How did Walter Stoessel operate at that time?

MATTHEWS: Walt Stoessel was one of the great professionals of the Foreign Service. In that sense I always think of him very fondly as representing the epitome in the best possible sense of the “old” Foreign Service. But lest I paint a picture of a 19th century person distant from the more modern ways, he was where he was with the succession of

high level posts which he had held, both in the Department and abroad, because he was very, very good, a keen mind, a wonderful diplomat in the traditional sense. And his talents and his personality were such a combination that he was very effective. And that's why, without any doubt, Al Haig had known and liked him and admired his work so much from the Kissinger days, and why he turned to him to be first the number three, and then the number two when he became Secretary of State. There were a lot of flashing knives in the bureaucracy at the time. There were disputes to be resolved, turf fights, of monumental proportions between the disarmament agency, ACDA, and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at State. There had been such things earlier, but it reached classic dimensions, I would say, during this period, and Walter was the one Haig turned to to say, now Walter, take care of this, and he did it remarkably well. He had a lot of class and cachet, a lot of entree with people who would otherwise be prone to get upset with someone trying to decide turf issues.

Q: Did Walter Stoessel have any particular area of foreign affairs relationships that he particularly monitored, and that you were privy to?

MATTHEWS: We dealt with them all across the board because, as I mentioned, he was so often acting Secretary, and he was always in the key small principals groups that were working both on developing policy and then carrying it out. Haig turned to him repeatedly to be part of the striking arm, and we were vitally involved for example in the Falklands war, in terms of diplomacy going on between ourselves and the Brits, and the Argentines. Of course, Stoessel was considered, and rightly so, a Soviet expert, one of the Soviet area greats. And we did things in that vein, but really the job at that level of the Department, and particularly at that time which was so tumultuous, you didn't have the luxury if I can use that word, of confining yourself even to just US-Soviet relations which were already very important. So we worked across the board, and had lots to do with East Asia and the Pacific area. We went out there several times on missions. Had an awful lot to do with Latin America, and the whole Sandinista-Nicaragua business.

Q: How long were you with Stoessel?

MATTHEWS: I stayed with him through his retirement in the summer of 1982. This was following Haig's resignation. Walter, of course, became immediately acting Secretary of State, and served in that capacity until George Shultz, who had been nominated, had his confirmation hearings, and was sworn in. And Stoessel had indicated that he planned to retire when he was in Germany back in 1980, and told Shultz he would carry through on his retirement. At that point then I was on short notice and given my next assignment. Guess where? To the Senior Seminar, and that time I went.

Q: Going back to two occurrences that immediately come to mind during this period. On the Falklands problem, did you sense how we were viewing this? Was there any particular hesitation on the part of Haig, Stoessel, about what stand we should take? Whether it was with Argentina, or with the Brits?

MATTHEWS: There was a strong sense from the outset that we had to be Britain's staunch ally in this. That was accompanied very much by a strong, strong desire to avert this conflict if at all possible. You may recall that Haig took it upon himself, some from the European side, and of course some from the ARA side on these aircraft going back and forth these incredible distances between Buenos Aires and London, and Washington every now and then. On one of those occasions after like the third or fourth such round trip, Stoessel and I were in London for some other mission, and our paths crossed, and it was this eerie shocking sight of my colleagues, the US negotiating group that had been flying back and forth for these long days and nights to avert this war, who looked like they might all just up and die within about five minutes because you've never seen people absolutely gray, and ashen, jet lagged, and having spent too much time in an artificial airplane environment. So lots of effort and concern went into trying to avert this. Of course, it did not succeed. But I do recall there was throughout a sense that we had to stand up and be counted.

Q: Did you sense any attempt on the part of our ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, who had her own almost agenda which was much more pro-Argentinian, I think one can term it, at that point. Was there a feeling that she was not on the team?

MATTHEWS: There were some instances where certainly she had her input, and properly so, since in addition to being our ambassador to the United Nations, President Reagan had accorded her cabinet status. So she definitely had her input, and as I recall, even though she would call Secretary Haig and speak with him, he a number of times was preoccupied with this and that and Walt Stoessel would take the call. Of course, there were numerous meetings when she would be here in Washington, and there would be get togethers either in Haig's office, or Stoessel's office. I sat in on many of those, not all of them, and she was certainly trying, as were others, to avert the conflict by pointing out the damage that this would cause all concerned, particularly our interest vis-a-vis Argentina. But then the die was cast, and the fighting ensued, and there was a sinking of this Argentine ship...

Q: ...the cruiser which was an old American cruiser.

MATTHEWS: But then the die was cast, and most of what I'm recalling was in that intense period leading up to the onset of hostilities.

Q: How about the other event that occurs to me, I'm sure there were others, but was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, I guess in '82, where there was a suspicion that Al Haig might have given Sharon, who was Defense Minister, almost the green light or something like this. Did you see any aspect of this whole...

MATTHEWS: I'd have to get the timing down on that. At some point, Stoessel, I was with him, went on a special mission on behalf of the president to Egypt and Israel. We shuttled back and forth between Jerusalem and Cairo for at least two weeks, on the return of the Sinai. We had numerous meetings with Prime Minister Begin, and the Egyptian top

leadership. But my recollection, we'll want to check the timing on this, is that that invasion was another occasion.

Q: I frankly don't have anything that I can refer to right away, but I believe President Reagan and Haig were in England at the time when this happened, and that all hell was breaking loose and they were trying to...remember there was some sort of a meeting in London.

Secretary Haig kept using the phrase: I'm the vicar of the President's foreign policy. Did you ever figure out what this meant?

MATTHEWS: It is very interesting you remind me of that. I recalled earlier the meeting he had with the 30-odd Department officials that was like the day after or so that he first came into the Department. I was there that first day, jammed into the diplomatic lobby with the others, and he gave a little talk right down there by the memorial plaque, that's where he used the memorable line that he was the vicar of foreign policy. I remember a number of people being somewhat bemused by this choice of words. I guess, to answer you, I don't think we ever quite figured out what he meant, although Secretary Haig felt very early on that he, the State Department, should be preeminent in the inter-agency chairing of key foreign policy studies. And that led to some problems in the first few weeks.

Q: Correct me if I'm wrong, but you were right in the middle of this thing. If I recall, when Haig came in he was probably the most experienced person of the high ranking people on the president's team. But he was not a true believer. I mean, there were certain suspicions, and if I recall, he sort of plunked a memo down, or something, or an agreement, and tried to get everybody to sign off which stated just what you said, that he was the prime person in charge of foreign affairs which was not accepted, and was considered to be somewhat of a power grab. I was wondering though, as Walter Stoessel being Under Secretary for Political Affairs, I would have thought might have on the technical side have a hand in

drafting something like that, knowing the ends and outs of things. Could you talk about that a bit?

MATTHEWS: We were involved in those first tumultuous days in the drafting of this document, or there may have been a couple of them, since he went through several drafts as you would expect. I remember talking with Stoessel about that really being something. I can't recall that I knew, or that Stoessel knew what, or when I should say, it would be used. Obviously Secretary Haig was going to lay it on the president, but we weren't sure just when. There was a lot of pressure to get this thing drawn up, and there were some others involved among his key inner staff. I think in the event, he did it at some ceremonial event over at the White House that first week or two in the presidency, and he immediately, of course, upset Cap Weinberger who was Secretary of Defense, and some of the other people, Dick Allen who was the National Security Advisor, and that was probably the first clash in the bureaucratic conflict, the first of many.

Q: Again, I'm reaching because I was not involved in these affairs, these are just sort of shadows that come from press accounts. Were you aware of bureaucratic efforts to undercut the Secretary of State? I'm thinking of the Falkland Islands thing when all of a sudden you couldn't have Air Force One...various things like this of the White House apparatchiks of the Reagan administration trying to get at the...

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes, I'm very aware. I was witness to...

Q: Could you talk a bit about this?

MATTHEWS: Well, of course, my office being next to the executive secretary of the Department, I was aware of the annoyances. The Secretary of State needed to get a presidential imprimatur to use military aircraft for special missions. At some point, I forget just when it started, Secretary Haig felt that he was being given less than the best airplane available for this and that mission. This was sort of a recurring neuralgic thing which got ever more neuralgic. The particular instance I'm thinking of, where I was more than

personally involved, was on a trip...I almost hesitate to say which one it was, but Stoessel and I were with the President on a foreign trip, we were on Air Force One, and we were in this country wherever, it was one of several. I can't quite remember for sure, it may come back to me. By this time, Bill Clark was the National Security Advisor, and when you're on presidential missions to small countries you're all kind of jammed up together. So by happenstance I wondered into an area of the palace wherever it was we were being put up, and I overheard the deputy National Security Advisor say to another high personage from the White House: this is really going to get Haig's goat, and they started laughing as it had to do with the assigning to him for some mission he was doing of one of the converted KC-135 tanker aircraft which had no windows.

Q: I heard about that.

MATTHEWS: And, in fact, it did not take long at all...I remember I broke off from that trip, a number of us did, after that stop, and I came back on another special mission aircraft. It was only a few days later in fact when Haig got the word and hit the ceiling over whatever aircraft slight this represented. To be serious, I do not try to make fun of it because it was a serious matter, particularly with all these comings and goings. If you had less than the largest and most comfortable aircraft you did tend to notice these things. Yes, there was a pattern of trying to goad Haig. It wasn't confined just to aircraft I think. We're now in a period leading up to the last four months before he actually resigned. It was one of a downward spiral of crises in that sense.

Q: From your point of view, you're sitting there seeing a lot of stuff, hearing stuff, getting reflections from the Secretary of State, you're dealing at not quite the fly on the wall, you're more involved than that, but at the highest level of foreign affairs, dealing with President Ronald Reagan. Reports on Ronald Reagan are mixed. In some things supposedly he was very good. Other things he was both disinterested, ill informed, or manipulated by his staff. What were the initial reactions you were getting emanated from those who were dealing with him on foreign affairs, and then the change until you left?

MATTHEWS: I have to say that my impressions come as an insignificant staff person. I attended a number of sessions where the president was present. Walt Stoessel often represented the Department...remember President Reagan was big on cabinet government, particularly when he first came in. He always was big on it, but they would have these interminably long frequent meetings over in the cabinet room on all manner of subjects. Well, Haig definitely wanted the State Department to be represented, believed it should be represented, and there were almost always foreign policy issues on the agenda that came over from the cabinet secretary. It would really be rare if not...you almost wouldn't have one if you wouldn't have something on there that had some international angle. So I remember Stoessel used to come back from those, chuckling about President Reagan's wonderful way of coming out with anecdotes, and making the cabinet sessions as fun as perhaps they could be.

After some time, I recall, we would get these agendas in advance, of course, of the meeting, and it was one of my responsibilities to make sure that the powers that be in the Department coughed up briefing memos, and position papers for Stoessel. He would often be going in place of Haig so he sat right next to the president. I guess it was a meeting that came up on short notice, and Stoessel was in his big office, mine was out front, he got the agenda ahead of me because it had been given him. So the intercom rang and he said, Gary, can you come in here a minute? I went into the office, and he said, I've got to go over to the White House in 30 minutes. I think what it was he'd just found out that he was going to have to substitute for Haig, and by the way here's the agenda. He said, there's an agenda item here, and what's the State Department position on kidney dialysis? Jesus Christ! I said, I have no idea. I don't know what the heck we did, but we didn't want to think of sending over our acting Secretary of State, or whatever he was at that point, and not have a position on it. Someone probably made it up off the top of their head and came up with several lines that he could take over. Then, of course, it never even came up at the cabinet meeting. There were lots of issues like this that were not even tangential, totally unrelated to any...those cabinet meetings after a while sort of became less and less

frequent...I have many recollections of the White House but generally it was a positive feeling about President Reagan. For one thing, he was such a pleasant man to be around. There were the tales of his attention span, etc. But I must say even with Carter who was much more, you know, into big briefing books, I've always felt that what presidents say and do is more a function of what their staff primes them for.

Q: I used to have a certain amount of concern...this is as an almost retired Foreign Service officer when there was a crisis and knowing that Judge Clark was going in to Ronald Reagan, and their decision might mean what the United States might do in a crisis when he was National Security Advisor, and I thought of two people who were in a way ill-equipped to understand the intricacies. Did this ever concern you at all?

MATTHEWS: No, because it would never have happened that I ever knew about that the two of them would have decided such big issues. You would have had Haig, or Stoessel, or Cap Weinberger, or Poindexter, or any number of others, including Bud McFarlane who was a very steady guy really, a very impressive fellow. I really don't think that that scenario was a problem, not that certainly Judge Clark who, of course, was a good personal friend of the president, couldn't go one on one with him on something. I'll say this about Clark, he was always very careful when he was at State and I believe this carried over to after he went over to the White House, to make sure he had people present who did know the issues. He conceded, if you will, that he needed to get up to snuff on these things.

Q: But he was more of an expediter in getting people on the team, which can be as important a job as being the absolute genius and knowing the answers.

MATTHEWS: Absolutely, and in fact you could make the case that that's probably one of the best functions the National Security Advisor can serve as being the, as we say in Russian, the tolkach, the expediter, the person who makes sure everything is as coordinated, etc., as possible.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point. I'm going to put on here at the very end the one thing we do before you go to the Senior Seminar in '82 to figure out when there was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and were you around at the time, and Alexander Haig's role from what you were getting by osmosis. And also, why don't we talk a little bit at that time about what you saw about the relationship of the Haig-State Department and obviously the White House relationship to Israel during the period you were there?

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Q: Today is the 26th of September, 1996. Gary, you heard what we're talking about. Could you talk a bit about what you knew of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, incursion into Lebanon or whatever you want to call it which was in...

MATTHEWS: We talked last time and I had a fuzzy recollection. And indeed, I discovered the reason for my fuzzy recollection is that I took three or four weeks of leave, as I recall, and got myself ready for the rigors of the Senior Seminar.

Q: Okay, so essentially you weren't there at the time. But let's talk about what you were picking up by osmosis about the new administration and Israel.

MATTHEWS: Well, in fact some of it was not based just on osmosis because Secretary of State Haig, indeed I think it was the White House mission we were on, had settled on Walt Stoessel to head the US delegation to complete the final negotiations between Israel and Egypt on the return of the Sinai. This had been the subject of prolonged talks and negotiations with the US, this had gone on for some years and enough progress had been made between the parties, but with some very real and difficult sticking points remaining. The idea was to have a mission which Walt Stoessel in fact headed as deputy Secretary of State to come up with compromises, to let the deal go through. So we went over and I should have checked some old calendars or something I might have to check when that was. That was about a two week mission. We were shuttling between Cairo and Tel Aviv

and Jerusalem. I want to say that was early '82, it may have already been June of '81, sorry to be vague on that...

Q: You can pick this up later.

MATTHEWS: I'll pick this up later. But throughout our time there in the first year and a half of the Reagan administration, certainly relations with Israel were, as I perceived them, quite close, and Nick Veliotes was the assistant secretary for Near East affairs and as I recall it, this was perceived as a period when we were really reconnecting some of the ends of the relationship that perhaps the Reagan administration believed had become frayed during the previous administration. The shuttle mission on return of the Sinai was successful. The parties came to an agreement. We had frequent meetings with Prime Minister Begin and his cabinet. And we'd fly to Cairo and had meetings with the Egyptian leadership.

Q: Did you get any feel for various styles of the approach between the Egyptians and the Israelis as reflected from your observations, on how issues were dealt with?

MATTHEWS: Certainly the one thing that I recall and remember most vividly is that when we would get together with Prime Minister Begin virtually his whole cabinet was right there.

Q: It was a real cabinet government.

MATTHEWS: It gave new meaning to the word cabinet, and we would have the sessions which were quite detailed, a lot of give and take. And my recollection is that when we then flew back to Cairo to present Israeli positions, of course overlaid with the US suggestions as to how this might all come to agreement, that those meetings were more one on one or at least there were far fewer players involved on the Egyptian side. So there was certainly a difference on how they approached the issues. Certainly, anyone who had anything to do with the Israeli government during those years would I'm sure agree. Prime Minister Begin took very viscerally, very personally, the idea of Judea and Sumeria, the historical

parts of Israel. Of course, that consideration did not apply to the Sinai Peninsula, although given of course the war, there was a lot of care on the Israeli side, a lot of concern, that it be set up in a way that they would not again be threatened. And, in fact, that whole agreement has worked famously well. We have the Sinai field mission, the very elaborate, and I think the very workable system for monitoring events in the Sinai so that each side, the Israeli side in particular, can be assured of demilitarization.

Q: Did you have the feeling that we were dragging either of the parties kicking and screaming? Or did they both want to let a third party do their work for them in a way?

MATTHEWS: I think more the latter. That's my sense without having been involved at all intimately in the very hard detailed work that these experts would have done to prepare for the final stage of negotiations, my sense is that it was indeed something that both parties felt could be accomplished. As opposed to, contrasted with, the far more sensitive issues of Israeli settlements in occupied territories, and the events which were taking place in southern Lebanon at the time.

Q: So you got out of there just in time to avoid...not just in time, but you were not there during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. But you went to the Senior Seminar.

MATTHEWS: That's right, I did. And then also Walt Stoessel had been sent on a mission, the annual ASEAN Ministerial conference, and the ANZUS, the Australian-New Zealand alliance. We had made a trip to Southeast Asia, I believe the ASEAN conference was held in Singapore, and then we went on to Australia for an ANZUS meeting. This was June of '82. Of this there is no doubt in my mind of the date. So that suggests to me that the Sinai mission was sometime earlier. I'll have to check the dates on that. But that was the hot June, as it were, where Secretary Haig up and resigned. We had touched down in Pago Pago, Samoa of all places, to refuel. We were on our way back from the ASEAN and ANZUS ministerials, and I think we were all set then to make some visits, and have some consultations at CINCPAC headquarters in Hawaii, but a telephone call literally came

through to Pago Pago, ordering Walter Stoessel to come back soonest to become acting Secretary of State because Al Haig had finally up and resigned. That we did. And it was very soon thereafter that the president named George Shultz as his choice to be Secretary of State. And Mr. Shultz, I think, quite quickly also named his choice of Kenneth Dam to be deputy Secretary, and Walt Stoessel had planned to retire anyway. Walter did stay on in an acting capacity obviously until Shultz was confirmed. So you might say we both said our farewells at that time, although he stayed on in an acting capacity, and would have had obviously more than something to do with the Mid East during that June-July period.

Q: You were in the Senior Seminar for the scholastic year of '82 to '83?

MATTHEWS: That's right.

Q: Could you explain a little what was the Senior Seminar, and what did you do, and what do you feel you got out of it?

MATTHEWS: Well, it was then, as now, the senior-most training for US officers. By the way it started out as the Senior Seminar in 1958 when it was set up, and at some point the linguistic mavens thought it should be renamed the Executive Seminar in National and International Affairs. We always thought that this was more than a mouth full, and that Senior Seminar sounded better. Of course, as you know, subsequently the original name was restored. It was a great year, then as now, and all of our travel was exclusively in the continental US We were exposed to domestic issues of all kinds, both on the favorable side if you will, whither agriculture, and industrial restructuring, to the less pleasant topics of crime, and drugs, and poverty and the like. It was just a tremendously insightful and stimulating year which frankly all of us agreed at the end had made us much more thoughtful about many things. And I believe we all quite agreed, and have thought subsequently, that it made us better officers in our respective agencies and services than ever would have been the case otherwise. The reason I tend to have more insights into

this than otherwise is that I've been on the board of the Senior Seminar Alumni Association for a good many years. I've been president of it for four. So I hear these tales.

Q: I'm an alumnus. I'm class of 17. For me one of the most vivid things was going into Detroit and seeing scenes that were reminiscent of what I had seen in post-war Germany after the bombing. I mean, houses burned down by both carelessness, and arsonists.

MATTHEWS: That would have been quite a year. In your group, your year was '74 which was also a tumultuous year in terms of some of the...

Q: Watergate. In '83 you're out, and whither?

MATTHEWS: Well, in fact, I left slightly ahead of the class. An old friend of mine was Mel Levitsky. We'd served together in the Soviet Union, and been together in the office of Soviet affairs at State, and in the executive secretariat. We served together a number of times. He was the senior deputy assistant secretary of State in the Bureau of Human Rights, HA. Mel got tapped to become ambassador to Bulgaria, so in the way that things work in the Foreign Service, as you well know, I was asked over for an interview with the assistant secretary, and in fact got “chosen” to be Mel's replacement. So I bailed out of the Senior Seminar a few weeks early, although I went ahead and completed my study, and all those final things. I think I missed a trip, especially one of the good trips, one of the good military trips. So I was already beavering away by April of 1983 in my new job at the State Department.

Q: In the Bureau of Human Rights, you were there from when to when?

MATTHEWS: I was there then from the spring of '83 through the fall of 1985.

Q: Could you describe the Bureau a bit at that time, and what were its responsibilities?

MATTHEWS: Of course, it was and I suppose is, one of the smaller functional bureaus at the State Department. The genesis for the bureau's existence, of course, is essentially

a congressional mandate which reached its apotheosis during the Carter administration when congressional efforts, legislation, actually created this Bureau of Human Rights. Some of the issues, including sensitive issues, of course, tended sometimes to be submerged by the regional bureaus. For the first time they were being addressed directly, and you might say were the primary tier of responsibilities of one bureau. Pat Derian was the first assistant secretary for Human Rights in the Carter Administration. And Elliott Abrams started out originally as the assistant secretary for IO, International Organizations, and then was asked by Secretary Shultz to step over and be the assistant secretary for Human Rights in the Reagan administration.

The initial years of the existence of the HA Bureau, the Human Rights Bureau, had been difficult ones in the sense that as happens often in the bureaucracy when you have a new theme grafted onto the operating structure, those who are used to operating in the traditional mode, in the traditional structure, do not like it at all. And in the case of the Human Rights Bureau, where issues were being raised with governments in painful ways at times because of their human rights practices, this had engendered a great deal of friction from time to time between the regional bureaus, which were pursuing you might say the classic priorities in terms of managing relations with a given country, albeit with difficulties, and the Human Rights Bureau which had human rights issues, sometimes very contentious ones, as its sole responsibility. Pat Derian, as the very first leader of that bureau, had run into the initial flak. There was still quite a bit of it around by the time I got there, although it had begun to lessen somewhat to the extent that the regional bureaus realized that this was a fact of life, and there was beginning to be a search, both on the part of the regional bureaus, and certainly on the part of the Human Rights Bureau, to seek ways and coordinating mechanisms which could make it all work better. I like to at least think back on my tenure as having undertaken several initiatives which helped move that along. Certainly, without any doubt, and I think quite unforeseen by the creators of the Human Rights Bureau, be they in congress or those who were in other areas, human rights had an enormous role, had an enormous impact, on the developments in the Soviet

Union, and in Eastern Europe. But even though certainly those human rights issues in those areas were a large part of our concern, we were at least equally so, if not more so, fixated on human rights problems in our own hemisphere, to wit, Central America, South America, and then elsewhere around the globe.

Q: Let's talk first about, as you saw it during this time...we're talking about '83 to '85.

MATTHEWS: That's right.

Q: The role of the Human Rights Bureau, and whatever involvement you had in it with almost laying the groundwork for the unraveling of the Soviet Union, or helping.

MATTHEWS: And recall, too, I believe we discussed last time, or maybe even the previous time, this was a period in the Soviet Union of severe repression of minorities, of Jews. There were terrible human rights problems, and indeed worse than they had been for some time. Anatoly Sharansky and others were imprisoned...

Q: He was a Jewish...

MATTHEWS: ...Refusenik, dissident, activist, and a very courageously outspoken person who paid the price by being sent to labor camps for anti-Soviet behavior, and other such charges. He may have been one of the most famous of the various names. Orlov and others also stood up and were seized by the KGB. But there were many, there were many, many. These were also the years when the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE, was having its review conferences, the original CSCE having been set up in 1975. The Human Rights Bureau along with the European Bureau, and some other entities as well of course, was a key player in participating in those review conferences. And you had then, as you have now, the annual session of the human rights organization in Geneva each year. That's already perennial, so we had a big role in that.

And the other huge thing, quite apart from our day to day bureaucratic exercises in putting out fires, and trying to put out fires, was of course the mandated preparation of the individual country human rights reports. This was a mammoth undertaking which became more so as Congress would write new legislation into the Foreign Assistance Act saying you need to cover additional items, labor issues, the plight of women, the plight of children, child labor. The mandate for what you should cover got ever wider. I mentioned that there had been friction between the regional bureaus and the Human Rights Bureau going back to the establishment of the Human Rights Bureau, and the biggest source of this was certainly the annual preparation of the human rights reports where the Human Rights Bureau people would fall on their swords to have the reports be as candid as possible about human rights abuses and problems. The regional bureaus, and individual country desks wishing to massage things, put them in context, etc. It had become clear to me after going through my first such exercise that there had to be a better way to handle it. We had the mandate, that was not going to change. It needed to be done as ably, and thoroughly, as possible, and as honestly as possible. But we had to advance beyond this we-they thing between the regional bureaus and the Human Rights Bureau. So the innovation we came up with, and I don't take credit for too many things that ever happened in the State Department, but I did have a big role in this one, was to have each bureau identify experienced Foreign Service officers whom they thought well of, who had been specialists in that region, be it Mid East specialists, African specialists, Latin American, Asian, etc. The five regional bureaus would choose those individuals, most retired as I recall, not all, but all experienced, more senior people. That proved to be the great solution to the acrimonious handling of these reports. That doesn't mean we still didn't have a lot of jockeying in the final stages of preparation of the reports, but this worked marvelously well. That pattern was set, and that was followed for a good many years. I'm not sure exactly how they do it now. I think they still rely to some extent on this approach.

Q: Well, Gary, since we're talking about diplomacy, and its often been said, the real diplomacy has nothing to do with us at an embassy abroad dealing with another country.

It's really dealing within our own government, or particularly within our own bureau or Department of State. You got this idea of having insiders, but who were not quite outsiders, either retired or ones who were not right on the job and having to answer, to do these things. How did one go about selling this both to human rights, oh, my God, there's going to be a bunch of ringers, and to the bureaus who said, yes, this is all right, but we don't have control over these guys. How did this work out?

MATTHEWS: It actually worked out marvelously well, and much more smoothly than I would have thought. Obviously the assistant secretary and I as the senior deputy, looked at all the candidates, those nominated by the regional bureaus, and as I recall, it was not a particularly difficult or prolonged process to choose these individuals. The structure was such that although they worked under the aegis of HA, the Human Rights Bureau, large portions of any given day were probably spent as much in their old regional bureau as anywhere, as well as liaising by telegram, or I suppose occasionally by telephone, with the embassies involved. That was about the time we began to rely more and more on our missions abroad to prepare the initial draft of the human rights reports, and then they would go through a very careful process of being revised, edited, drafts sent back to the post, their comments. And over the course of several years, this actually became smoother and smoother. I really can't recall that we ran into any problems in terms of the acceptance. Of course, it was an HA initiative, which I don't wish to sound immodest about, but what I wanted to do was get away from this we-they thing which was so distracting, to use a mild word.

Q: Would one gather, the officers who were going to do this, and have the equivalent to a seminar, of saying what was wanted, what was the background, what was the approach?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes. We had the template, I mean in the sense that the issues that would be the chapters, the subjects, the issues. Those were a given, those were standardized. In other words, especially as time went on, you would cover as many of these things for a small tiny little country as often you would for a large country, although

obviously the length of the report would be correspondingly greater or lesser. But one of the things, as I reflect on this, that made it go so smoothly is that you didn't have to reinvent the wheel for each country or region. You were looking at a standardized set of criteria and issues, and the narratives and the things that you wanted to say about whatever practice it was, e.g., is torture practiced? Yes - No. If there are human rights organizations in that country, what kinds of complaints do they deal with? So it was really quite a good construct.

Q: Could you talk a bit about some individual countries, because there are ones where I can see, and I know just by hearsay the real problems. I think the outstanding one is always Israel. During the time you were doing that, were there any particular problems with getting an accurate report on Israel?

MATTHEWS: Not really. I mean we had a very able, extremely able, embassy staff in Tel Aviv, and the consulate general in Jerusalem, and no end of input from any and all other sources. The report on Israel was obviously a “sensitive” one because Israel is, you know, a major ally, indeed a strategic ally. We always spoke very candidly with all concerned. I should add here that as part of the process of gathering material, we met frequently with human rights organizations in the United States, and of course elsewhere, to get their views on what they thought. Obviously, the US government had its critics in that regard but it did seem as time went on that most, even grudgingly, conceded that the objectivity level was quite good.

Q: Did you kind of shudder every time the Israeli one came out?

MATTHEWS: Not really. As far as I was concerned, I was the senior deputy, and I had to deal with relations with all the bureaus. There was such a huge staggering volume of work, even once we had our special team in place, that the perturbations of a problem country tended to be overtaken by the next set of problems I had of whatever nature. I don't recall that there were any particular aggravations. We would always have a special

press conference in the press briefing room at the State Department to announce the release of the human rights report. That was always extremely well attended by all of the movers and shakers in the media. Of course, during my time Elliott Abrams was the assistant secretary, but I think there was one year when he was on official travel or something and I wound up doing it. We had very, very wide and frequent contact with the media in the Human Rights Bureau and I think that continues to this very day. Certainly Abrams felt, and I believe any assistant secretary holding that position would feel that when it comes to human rights problems, sunshine is the best disinfectant. I heard Elliott say that many, many times. Obviously, there were problem countries where you could bring all the sunshine you cared to bear, but they were going to do their own thing.

Q: When you get an exercise like this from a bureaucratic point of view, you say what an immense effort it was, and yet in many ways wasn't this really pointed at a few countries, and in most other countries it was sort of an exercise.

MATTHEWS: I suppose inevitably in the end it amounted to that. It was not our freedom of choice because of course we had the Congressional mandate from early on to do it on all countries. As I mentioned, the criteria, or the issues which you needed to address were widened regularly. But you're absolutely right, Stu, that when it came time for that press conference, the media were going to turn to the ten or twelve countries of particular interest whether they be in Central America, or South Africa—that was the other biggie at the time. Obviously the Soviet Union, Israel, etc.

Q: Publishing this stuff, did you get involved in trying to change things in countries?

MATTHEWS: Well, change in the sense that operationally, I can't think there was ever a week when I or some of my staff weren't on the phone to someone at one of our embassies, say in Uruguay, Paraguay, Guatemala, El Salvador, asking them to look into a particular case that had been brought to our attention, most often by a NGO, non-governmental human rights organization. We would initiate, if they did not initiate it

themselves, we would initiate memoranda and telegrams...that is to say, at our initiative memoranda and telegrams would be prepared with the involvement of the regional bureau. Obviously, regional bureaus had to pass on those things being sent out to their embassies. We did a lot of press guidance, press commentary, had the spokesman make some comment about an election wherever it might be that was fishy. Or if there was an egregious human rights violation, someone sentenced to a labor camp for political activities, we would always arrange to have negative account taken of that. Sometimes, by the way, this involved the White House. We had a very active liaison with the White House since President Reagan keenly liked to get involved in human rights issues. There were numerous occasions when we would have events over at the White House, that main auditorium over there, where the President would appear and speak at the program.

Q: Did you find, as a professional Foreign Service officer looking at this, let's say a Uruguayan was thrown into jail by the Uruguayan authorities for something that we didn't think was justifiable. I mean if we were intervening, did it concern you that sort of, what business is this of ours?

MATTHEWS: No, that never really bothered me. Keep in mind too, that I had already served and specialized in Eastern European and Soviet affairs, so I had had occasion to see egregious human rights violations very much up close. And because of CSCE, if you're talking of anything that was happening in Europe with the 35 signatory partners, it seemed to me that you had a clear mandate to speak out, to act, to conduct a diplomatic demarche wherever it might be. As far as the world at large, we had the universal declaration of human rights which every country had signed under United Nations auspices. Then you had a variety of other international treaties and instruments that many had signed. It certainly never caused me any doubts, or unease, to be raising these issues and matters. I have to say that even over my time then, I sensed that it became less difficult for the regional bureaus to accept that that was the kind of thing that should be done.

Q: Were you getting any emanations from other countries, or any from our allies? I'm thinking like the Brits, the French, Italians, Canadians about these activities. Were they sort of looking down their noses and saying, these juristical Americans...

MATTHEWS: The Wilsonian American types. That had happened, mostly as I could reconstruct it during the first two or three years, that was the Carter administration where it was just such an unheard of thing, that my God, a government would mess up what should be a normal diplomatic exchange with mentioning something as unpleasant that an opposition politician had been thrown into the slammer. By our time, the process had gotten to the point that every country you just named, every one of those governments, had named its own analogous human rights office, or person. Now, admittedly, it usually was either a small office, or one personage. But many of them proved to be very active. Canada had always been very active in human rights even before the establishment of the Human Rights Bureau. So we always worked very closely, and congenially, with them. France had its office, and the Brits, I recall, we would have consultations both over there, and they would come over here. That really wasn't a problem. The Soviet officials did not like it one little bit, and they did not have such an office I might add.

Q: What about our saying you've thrown people in jail, or you're doing this or that, then someone takes a look and seeing how many people we have in jail. In other words, things we're doing because we've got a lot of things going on which could be interrupted quite different by someone who wants to interrupt it differently.

MATTHEWS: Well, yes, the frequent one we always heard from a number of people was, how come you have the death penalty, cruel and unusual punishment. Our reply to that, as with many other things, is that we had, as many countries do have, the rule of law. We observe due process, trial by peers, etc. Is the court system more or less free, uncontaminated by political influence, etc. Those by the way were also sections within the

human rights reports where we measured performance. Most of that criticism came in the form of propaganda from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.

Q: What was your impression of the non-governmental agencies that worked abroad? I'm thinking of Amnesty International and other ones, both the caliber and the type of information you were getting.

MATTHEWS: They were very, very good. Most of them, the ones who were real practitioners in the area of human rights, or dealing with human rights abuses and problems, really did have their nose to the ground, and were in a position to know things, hear things, and report accordingly. Amnesty certainly is first and foremost a case in point. I was amazed soon after getting into the job to find out just how diverse and large the human rights community is...which referred to itself as the movement. It really was. I mean it was very diverse, and you had people specializing in this hemisphere, the Soviet Union, the communist countries, Africa, a wide, wide range, a panoply of organizations. And I found them to be by and large, as individuals, fine people. There were some organizations which tended to be very aggressive...they had become politicized, and didn't want to entertain the thought that there could be anything other than human rights as a consideration governing relations with that country. Pat Derian and her people had certainly run into this in spades in their time, and we ran into that on occasion. But the response then, as now, was that as important as human rights the issue is, you can't completely disregard all other considerations. However, there were also a few ideologically motivated advocacy groups, very left wing, who cloaked themselves in human rights robes when, in fact, they pushed their own political agendas.

Q: During this time you were there in Human Rights from '83 to '85, were there any particular events, issues, persons, or something that stick out in your mind in which we got involved?

MATTHEWS: Oh, gosh, there were so many, sort of a kaleidoscope, it's hard to recall. I did a lot of congressional testimony, met with people who had been either in prison, or tortured, or had suffered in this or that manner. I remember meeting with Avital Sharansky, the wife of Anatoly Sharansky who of course was still very much in labor camp imprisonment then. There was no end to problems. Unfortunately, in the human rights business, human rights violations represent a growth industry. The other thing was, as I mentioned, that by mandate, and by the way it worked, the actual human rights report which was a congressional committee print grew ever thicker, ever larger, and by '83, '84, '85, it was a tome of about five or six inches in thickness, weighing several pounds. So I said, if we had accomplished nothing else, we had gotten the human rights report book to the point where if you could identify a human rights violator, you could throw the book at him and do him grievous damage.

Q: One that comes to mind, I mean the normal villains, but one I would have thought would have been rather important at that particular time, would be Argentina because Argentina was getting involved I believe at that time...

MATTHEWS: The dirty war had ended.

Q: But the aftermath. Did you find Argentina was on your plate?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes, and we met with opposition politicians coming up from Argentina, and Chile I might add, all the time. I doubt if there was ever a month, it may not ever have been a week, when we were not meeting with the editor of some newspaper that had been closed down, or harassed, from South America, from Central America. But at that time most of the governments of Central America and South America were military dictatorships, or dictatorships of whatever else. It was a bad, bad overall situation.

Q: And also we were heaving involved in fighting the communists as we saw it in Nicaragua, and in El Salvador, and yet those who were fighting were heavily tainted with

human rights violations, and you had an extremely committed Reagan administration for doing...that must have caused you in a way the most difficulty.

MATTHEWS: It gave us a lot of problems that we had to deal with, but in terms of dealing with the problems in the country we tried to let the chips fall where they would. I mean, there were numerous demarches to the Salvadoran government, for example, about human rights abuses on the part of the military and the authorities down there. We received people coming up from there, particularly labor leaders, all the time. They were forever coming through, calling on us in the Human Rights Bureau. Obviously there was a war underway. My memories of that whole period are you had to pick out the thorns, things we had to deal with. They were happening in our hemisphere, just as Soviet human rights practices were awful at the time. It was sort of black and white...

Q: Everybody knew about it...it was just there.

MATTHEWS: That's right. You still had General Stroessner in Paraguay and every place you looked was a problem.

Q: Did you ever find, say people from the White House, NSC particularly, trying to say...kept hitting our boys in El Salvador or anything like that?

MATTHEWS: I certainly personally was never asked, and to my knowledge neither was Elliott Abrams or anyone else on my staff, and I would certainly have heard about it, to pull a punch in terms of calling it as we saw it. There were a lot of people, whether they were at the White House, or the Pentagon, or wherever else they were around town who were very involved in these issues, but we felt free to speak out on matters as we saw them based on reporting that had come to us from human rights organizations, or our embassy, whatever it might be, and we did so speak out. I think where the most contentious relations probably developed, would be on the part of organizations which were so outraged by what was happening in say whether it was El Salvador, or Guatemala, or Nicaragua, that they accused us of failing to do something about it. Well, there were instances where

despite everything that we could do, the larger situation was going to take time to change around. And in fact, in the years thereafter, things did get worked out in their own way.

Q: How did you find working with Congress? You mentioned testifying. Would they come up with, why aren't you doing something on such and such a case? What was both the questions, and the pressures coming from Congress?

MATTHEWS: Well, there were, and there are a lot of good people up in the Congress, including also some of the staff people who were super to deal with. But there was then, as there is now, a lot of posturing by people saying things, doing things, for political effect and how it would play with their constituencies. One rapidly became very adept at recognizing when it was genuine, and when it was politically motivated. Of course, especially given the passions of the national debate over US policy in Central America, you will not be shocked to hear that a lot of this found its resonance in the Central American set of issues. Well, not only our policy, and our approach in the Human Rights Bureau, but indeed our responsibility was to respond to any member of Congress, particularly committee chairmen who were all Democrats of course, for either formal testimony, or ad hoc queries. So I had a lot of dealings.

Q: George Shultz was Secretary of State during this time. Did you have any feel about how he related to this Human Rights Bureau?

MATTHEWS: He was personally responsible for asking Elliott Abrams to switch from International Organizations to the Human Rights Bureau, to get it back on its feet after the interregnum between the two administrations, including the hiatus when there was someone named who later withdrew his name from being put forward. Elliott had a very sound personal relationship with George Shultz, manifested later, I might add, in the early summer of '85 when Shultz asked Elliott to take over the Bureau of Latin American Affairs. So Elliott always felt, although like any good assistant secretary, he didn't abuse the privilege, he always felt that he had something that was really a point of principle. If

there arose a big difference of opinion between the Human Rights Bureau and a regional bureau, then he could take it to the Secretary, and we did on a periodic basis, including in Elliott's case taking things up personally.

Q: Can you think of any type of case, or case?

MATTHEWS: It would have been infrequent, but one which came up with some regularity would be approval of licenses to sell munitions to country X wherever it might be. If we had human rights concerns, which were vested in the Human Rights Bureau by legislation, then that might develop into a contretemps between the regional bureau, the Bureau of Political-Military affairs, and the Human Rights Bureau. I can think of issues that were taken to the Secretary on that where we opposed the sale of whatever it might be.

Q: How did Elliott Abrams work in the human rights field? I mean, as your boss. Could you say how he operated?

MATTHEWS: He was a hands on, hard working, young guy. There were a lot of young people in that Reagan administration, so Elliott had lots of energy. He recognized early on that a lot of work in human rights, trying to do something about it, is PR, working with the media, etc., so he had a fantastically busy schedule of speeches, media appearances on TV, Night Line, whatever it might be, congressional testimony, talking to non-governmental organizations. I wasn't quite so old at the time but I used to think, my God, if only I had such energy. I did a lot of that but he was on the go all the time, and very much an activist, not by any stretch of the imagination complacent in any way, form or shape. And that drive and enthusiasm was sent down and our bureau, though small as State Department bureaus go, was a very active one, particularly the Human Rights office which was our core office. All the offices came under me as the senior deputy, but that had the most day to day interaction with the regional bureaus, and there were seven or eight officers in that office. And Elliott got personally involved with virtually every visitor, official, dissident, artist,

or tortured politician who came up our way. He made it a point to always see these people, to see what was on their mind.

Q: In a way you were really monitoring the world, weren't you? And I'm talking about the people who would come through. It wasn't a matter of a bunch of bureaucrats just sitting back there and shuffling paper.

MATTHEWS: Oh, no, that was the exciting thing about working in Human Rights. You couldn't ignore the bureaucracy. You had to interact with the rest of the State Department and elsewhere in the government in that sense. But the refreshing thing was you were constantly dealing with non-governmental entities, people coming up from these countries, or the non-governmental organizations represented in Washington, New York, and elsewhere, and traveling around the country. We did a lot of public speaking around the US on US human rights policy.

Q: What was the reaction you'd get when you'd go out and give a typical speech from people. Were they saying, right on. Or what are we doing with this, or puzzlement? What were you getting?

MATTHEWS: They were generally interested in the issues. I mean, when you're talking on human rights you're really talking about what's happening in that country. You're talking about US relations with that country. But we did a lot of, you might say, pure educational work in the sense of explaining how we structured ourselves. Not just at the State Department in the Human Rights Bureau, but as a government to deal with human rights problems. That was unique, and I think people found it interesting. I can recall very little back-biting and criticism that we ran into, except there might be those who as you were giving a speech in a certain place who represented a lobby, or the rights of whoever in a certain place, might criticize you for not doing enough to turn things around there. But by and large it was a good and warm experience.

Q: You left the Human Rights Bureau in '85, where to?

MATTHEWS: I'd been chosen, and went through the seven veils, probably more like seven times seven veils to become ambassador to Malta. So I think I got my call from President Reagan in early spring of '85. He would personally call those chosen to be named ambassador, and it was quite a thrill. Then, as now, it takes some months to go through all the process, and get up to the point where you have your confirmation hearings, etc. Of course, I remained working in the Human Rights Bureau, and in fact became acting assistant secretary because Elliott was pulled over to be the Latin American Bureau head. So my last couple months or so, three months perhaps, in Washington were as acting assistant secretary and preparing to go to Malta where I arrived in August of 1985.

Q: And you were there until when?

MATTHEWS: I stayed there through May of 1987 when I was asked to come back to become the Coordinator for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. That was a glorific title, and what it really meant was...our embassy in Moscow, and many of our other posts in Eastern Europe were in the throes of all kinds of problems, operational problems and security problems, and in the case of embassy Moscow it was two things: it was the very sad state of our thoroughly bugged new embassy building, the new chancery in Moscow; and even more painfully, if you will, the aftermath of the Marine security guard scandal.

Q: We'll come to that, but let's go back to Malta. In the first place, Malta has been one of these places where its been sort of a mixed bag as far as career-non-career. I mean, it's sometimes career, sometimes non-career.

MATTHEWS: I was the last career person there.

Q: How did it come about that you got Malta? And then could you talk a bit about preparation for going out there?

MATTHEWS: The ambassadorial selection process is indeed virtually impossible to describe. The reason I knew a little bit more about it than the ordinary Foreign Service officer is, I had staffed the ambassadorial committee in the State Department during my time with Walter Stoessel. He was first a member of the committee, and later he chaired it, since that traditionally falls on the deputy Secretary of State. I went through a series of: would you like your name put on the list for this or that? At one point I even came very close...my name had been sent over to the White House to be ambassador—I can't remember whether it was to Iceland or some other place, and for various reasons someone else, a political person, wanted that. In the final analysis at the end of the day, Malta was given me. I like to think not without some regard for the fact that we had human rights concerns in Malta, and there I was just finishing up two and a half years as the human rights guy in the State Department. Also, I'd had quite a bit to do with dealing with anti-terrorism issues. We had significant issues in that area, mostly with Libya just to the south of Malta. But it proved to be a great place, a marvelous part of the world. The Maltese are lovely people, and I loved every minute of it.

Q: Could you explain what was the political and economic position of Malta when you arrived there in '85?

MATTHEWS: When I arrived in '85 they were ten years into rule by a socialist government. The famous, if not infamous, Dom Mintoff who had been the original leader of the Malta Labor Party, and had been Prime Minister for ten years, and he decided for reasons which were never entirely clear, even to the Maltese, to step aside and pass the Prime Ministership on to another party fellow, Mifsud Bonnici, by name, although Mintoff stayed very much in the background with lots of interests in things political and otherwise. Malta, which had achieved its independence from Great Britain after being a colony for the best part of 150 years, had broken with the US-Western European Security Alliance, that would be essentially NATO in '74-'79, including closing down the remaining naval bases in Malta. Malta has superb ports, facilities, and the like, and since a lot of the employment in Malta,

which is a small country, only about 375-380,000 inhabitants, a lot of the employment derived from those naval shipbuilding and ship servicing facilities. So the Labor Party had faced considerable unemployment and other problems, and had taken on a rather anti-western, anti-NATO vein which was still very much the case when I arrived in August of '85.

That said, Mintoff had governed not only with the formal governmental structure, which Malta certainly had in all respects, a very functioning government, but he was fond of cultivating great global diplomatic schemes to be the conciliator, the negotiator, for all manner of world problems, whether that was between the Soviet Union and the US, or between Libya and the US, or whatever it might be. Among other things under the socialist government, Mintoff and then Mifsud Bonnici, when I arrived the relationship between Malta and Libya had become very uncomfortably close. I think because the Maltese essentially misplayed their hand. They were not as clever in handling Qadhafi as they perhaps thought they were. And there were problems in Malta of terrorism operations which were at least staged through there, if not planned there—not involving the Maltese, but using Malta's rather unique location between NATO's southern flank and Libya, and some of the other places of concern to us. My whole time there was spent dealing with the last two years of that socialist government. I enjoyed close relations for the most part with the Prime Minister and his other ministers, albeit, having to talk about these problems quite directly. I also cultivated good relations with the opposition party leader and his people. And in May of 1987, shortly before I was asked to come back on fairly short notice to take over that new position, Malta held its regular election under the parliamentary system, and the Nationalist Party, headed by Eddie Fenech Adami, won after having been out for 12-13 years, and that's the same government that continues on to this very day. And the US at present, I think, enjoys quite close, quite congenial relations with the present government.

Q: When you were talking to the Labor government about their, as you say, increasingly close relations with the Libyans, how would they respond? Did they see Qadhafi as being sort of a dangerous nut as I think many of us felt.

MATTHEWS: Certainly in private they would concede that he could be a dangerous nut. But the Maltese officials with whom I spoke were always supremely confident of their ability to handle Qadhafi. Leave Qadhafi to us, we have had hundreds of years of experience of dealing with people like this. The problem was this was not always as evident to the US and others that they were able to handle it. And the Libyans we knew were up to no good at times. And, in fact, during my tenure there in the fall of 1986, we, the United States, went in and bombed Libya in response to acts of terrorism. So I was often involved in conveying demarches either formally, or informally, to the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and others in Malta about our concerns.

I'd like to back up a little bit and note that shortly after my arrival in Malta in 1985, there was a horrendous hijacking of an Egyptian airliner to Malta which resulted in the death of about 80-90 people, and to a large extent...I mean, this was a horrendous thing to happen, it would be to happen anywhere. In a little place like Malta it did color our anti-terrorism concern for years thereafter.

Q: Did we have any role of observing this...if I recall, it was an Egyptian plane that was hijacked, and then the Egyptians sent a team which thoroughly fouled up, or something.

MATTHEWS: The Egyptian airliner had been hijacked shortly after it took off from Athens on its way to Egypt, I believe. And the hijackers, who were Palestinians, hijacked the plane, and a gun fight broke out. The cabin lost pressurization, and to make a long story short, the airplane had to land in Malta because otherwise it would have crashed. And during the ensuing 24-36 hours I was at the airport, in fact right at the control tower with the Prime Minister, and all the other people, conveying the very firm US position that it was our wish as part of our basic tenet of our anti-terrorism policy, that the hijackers not be

permitted to continue on. In other words, that they should be dealt with and have to deal with the consequences of their actions. Complicating the situation was the fact that the hijackers, one hijacker to be specific, was taking the five American and Israeli passengers on board whom he had identified by virtue of collecting their passports, and every few hours he would shoot a different one in the back of the head. As you can well imagine, this added some degree of drama. It was a compulsive experience with a lot of back and forth. Basically, the Maltese government in the person of the Prime Minister personally, decided that Malta would hold firm, they would refuse the hijacker's demand to have the plane refueled so it could take off and go elsewhere. And during the long period of those 36 hours, or whatever, one of the other things going on was the government of Egypt whose aircraft it was, sent in a team of commandoes who arrived, and after sizing up the situation, decided to place an explosive charge at the rear of the aircraft, detonated it, and caused an explosion which resulted in a fireball which ran from the rear of the plane up through the front, which asphyxiated and killed 70-odd of the passengers. The subsequent autopsies showed very clearly the effect of the explosion because of the degree of soot in the lungs, correspondingly heavier toward the back, a little bit less so up front. Incredibly, the one hijacker, the sole hijacker who had been shooting the Israeli and American passengers in the back of the head and throwing them off onto the tarmac, incredibly he survived the storming of the plane, he was shot in the chest, had a lung sucking chest wound, and was taken to the Malta General Hospital, and subsequently identified as the hijacker. The man had very distinctive features. And Malta subsequently tried him, and found him guilty which was incontrovertible since there were eye witnesses all over the place. He received the maximum sentence which I think Malta could deliver for any such crime which was 25 years.

Then jumping ahead to long after I left, and not necessarily aware of the reasons for it, he was given early release but the US knew enough about it that we managed to get our hands on him, and we brought him to this country. This fellow, Omar Ali Rezak by name, had a trial here at the DC District Court some months ago, was found guilty, and will be

sentenced next week. The expectation is that he will be given life in prison. So it comes full circle.

Q: Did you have any relations with the Libyans while you were there?

MATTHEWS: They were very much about. In fact, there was a Libyan Cultural Center as well as the embassy. They called their embassy something else. They called it a Peoples' Bureau. You can imagine, Malta being the literally small place it is, and I being by the way without wishing to sound at all immodest, I was the tallest person in the whole country. I say this because Maltese tend to be somewhat of short stature. So at functions, whether at Maltese government functions or other diplomatic dos, I would run into Libyans. We basically didn't really have anything to say to one another. I certainly had no representations to make to them, and such exchanges as might ever occur between the US and Libya, I was not used as the interlocutor.

Q: We're talking about the magnificent harbor there, and this is still a time when the Soviet Union was plying the Mediterranean. Were we in a phase of positive denial, or were we looking at Malta as a harbor for any of our ships? Did it play any role at all?

MATTHEWS: No, it didn't. The Soviet Ambassador at the time, Victor Smirnov, was a friend and colleague. We would often frankly discuss how interesting it was that time and technology had essentially passed Malta by. I mean, as magnificent as the harbor was, and is, for commercial uses, it really was needed neither by the Soviet navy, nor at that point, by ours, because we had, and have, the superb facilities in Naples and elsewhere for the Sixth Fleet. It just did not arise. In fact, such operations in that part of the Mediterranean were almost exclusively our US Sixth Fleet. There was an occasional Soviet vessel, or Soviet submarine...not very many subs because the waters are rather shallow in that part of the Med, so you wouldn't want your subs to be quite that exposed. That was not really a problem, and particularly since the very firm policy of the Maltese

government was one of neutrality and non-alignment. They, for their part were not pushing for any new connection.

Q: You were there at the time when we were probably at our greatest confrontation with Libya and Qadhafi, both by sending ships into the Gulf of Sidra...weren't we doing that then? And were you there when there was some planes...

MATTHEWS: And then we bombed Libyan targets.

Q: The Maltese must have been upset. What were you getting from the Maltese?

MATTHEWS: Well, I of course, immediately conveyed our principled views and position on this matter to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. They, as was always the case, wished to play the role of a great world peacemaker, and were very interested in acting as the middle man to broker a truce, as it were, between us and Libya. So I would inform them that we would not be dealing with Malta to the extent that we had problems with Libya. This was not to be settled there. But ordinary Maltese, including a number of officials, privately acknowledged they could readily understand why we would have been so put out by the Libyans, and why we would seek to smite them in this way. I recall by the way, for whatever reason...of course I had more than inklings that things were going to happen, so I stayed all night in my office at the embassy, not that my residence was that far away, it wasn't my first time in my government service I'd slept on the sofa, and I had a rather good one there in the ambassador's office. So at one point I recall early in the morning, got a call from the US military command asking me what the weather was like. I reported that the weather was quite clear, quite nice, thank you very much. I don't think they really needed to call the American ambassador to find out what the weather was like. And in fact, the aftermath of our bombing Libya certainly represented no difficulty whatsoever in the type of relations we then had with the socialist government in Malta. We had our very clear views of matters. I'm sure Malta tried several more initiatives to play the great peacemaker but that was not a role that we were seeking for them to play.

Q: Did you get involved in trying to get the Maltese to vote correctly in the UN?

MATTHEWS: On, UN votes. In fact, embassies, including small ones like ours, we'd get all these broadcast cables that came out on all manner of subjects. We would sort through these, and there were issues that the Malta delegation to the United Nations was probably not going to vote on at all. To the extent I seized the Foreign Minister usually personally with the importance of something, he probably more often than not got his representative in New York to vote for the US position, rather than not voting at all. We didn't really have any head banging over something that they just out and out opposed us on. Maltese have always been big on multilateral diplomacy, and, in fact they always had very experienced diplomats in multilateral organizations. So they knew the scene. They were big CSCE players. Malta fancied itself as a father of CSCE, sometimes to the irritation of many other delegations. That was a world they felt very comfortable with.

Q: Why don't we pick this up the next time. You left Malta and you were taking this coordinator for Soviet Union...

MATTHEWS: ...and then as it turned out, Eastern Europe.

Q: We'll pick that up and the reasons for this.

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Q: Today is the 11th of October, 1996. You're going back, what's the date?

MATTHEWS: We are in May of 1987, well, almost June.

Q: So you went where?

MATTHEWS: Just to recap, I was closing on two years at my ambassadorial post in Malta. And over a period of some months there had been incidents at our Embassy in Moscow. Naturally, since I was basically an old Soviet hand, I had followed this in great detail, and

hardly missed a word that I could pick up. There had been a series of terrible problems involving the operations of our embassy in Moscow, and as it turned out subsequently, other operating problems and other problems in Eastern Europe. But there were two biggies which had occurred. One was the big blow-up of the “discovery” that the new office building, the new chancery building, which had been under construction for years and years in Moscow down the street from the site of our long existing old building which was a fire trap, that the new building had been determined to be totally penetrated, bugged, rendered virtually useless for any purpose whatsoever. And as a result of that...

Q: We're talking about Soviet...

MATTHEWS: ...by the KGB, by Soviet intelligence. That was brought to a head by, and I forget what specific event it was, but this is something that had been building for a long time as it subsequently proved to be the case. The other companion big scandal, and scandal would certainly be an appropriate word here, was the Marine security guard scandal which took place in '86, when it came to light that a Marine security guard, Lonetree by name, had been involved in contacts with the KGB, and it was a classic sort of use of female entrapment, etc.

Q: A honey trap.

MATTHEWS: ...honey trap, they had the very expression, and this grew as the investigation unfolded, led to the discovery and revelation that other Marine security guards had been involved, at least in lax practices of various and sundry nature. So, a long way of saying, as happens in Washington, the clouds of scandal were billowing about the State Department to say the least. So in casting about for in typical State Department tradition, for a way to handle this, it was deemed appropriate to find a special coordinator to deal with the many, many problems, and the many, many movers and shakers who were interested in having something done about those problems as soon as possible. So who knows how many people they considered in their deliberations, but I got a call from

George Vest who was Director General of the Foreign Service at the time, in early spring of 1987, when I was in Malta. He asked me if I would be willing to come back to take this position on short notice which had a lot of oomph behind it as I subsequently determined, a lot of knives behind virtually every door, which was no surprise to me, since that's the way these things happen.

Just a few specifics perhaps as stage setting for the year that then ensued: you had at least three if not four, as I recall, major high level investigations of both the embassy bugging scandal, and the Marine security guard scandal. I know that former Defense Secretary Laird chaired a very high level prestigious panel that made a major report and found a number of inadequacies, to say the least, in security practices, etc., at the embassy in Moscow. Former Defense Secretary, and secretary of other things as well, Jim Schlesinger conducted a study which was focused specifically on what one might do, one might best do, to solve the problem of the bugged new embassy building. This was more of an engineering, security study. But that also had a lot of high level oomph behind it. I dealt with the consequences of that study when I got back to Washington just in time to go with Jim Schlesinger up to the Hill for briefing of Senators, Congressmen, on it. That actually wound up having a lot to do with the very frenetic year which I then undertook. There was a third major study by the PFIAB, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, whose members believed they should be properly seized of this, and I'm sure that there was at least one or more other panels, not to mention of course the Department's own internal investigations, etc.

What to say? Sort of related to this, although deriving from other antecedents, really, was the problem of local employees. The local employees as you recall, Stu, from your own service in embassy Belgrade as well as in other posts in communist countries, were by all means trying to the extent they could to find out things, to spy on the Americans. And, of course, a lot of the internal security mechanisms which we had at our post whether it was the embassy in Moscow, or the embassies in Eastern Europe, or some of the consulates, were geared very much toward insuring much as we could that they really couldn't find

out anything that useful. At any rate, I can't recall quite the exact timing, but suffice to say it was generally in this time frame, the US took some measures to tighten up the access and utilization of Soviet national employees at our embassy in Moscow, and the Soviet government retaliated, or reacted, by withdrawing all, repeat all, of the local employees in the motor pool, the carpentry shop, the plumbing, and cleaning functions, and so on and on. Essentially, embassy Moscow was left totally on its own to operate all of these services which had been done by armies, if you will, of Soviet nationals, with its own rather meager American staff. I mention all this because this was all the scenery, the architecture as they like to say now about great events, that I found when I returned to Washington. Needless to say, coming back to a number of investigations, and hearings, and finger pointing by Congress...it seemed at one point to me that virtually everyone in the Congress had something going on this. Goodness knows, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the intelligence committees, corresponding committees on the House, all had their own separate fact finding missions, reports. So a lot of what I came back into immediately was being thrown up to Capitol Hill to some way, somehow, try to assure these outraged members of Congress that something would be done to get a handle on this.

Q: Could you give a little background about, as you saw it at that time, the antecedents of getting a new embassy, and how we conducted that? That would be a good place to start.

MATTHEWS: I can, and the reason I can do it with some degree of precision is that one of the major things which was done, and which I also paid a lot of attention to as soon as I got back, was the need to see what the dimensions of these terrible problems were...a look back to see just what the antecedents, what the origins of all this were. It started with the agreement for the construction of new embassy sites. This of course was reciprocal. We needed a new embassy in Moscow, the Soviets needed a new embassy in Washington. The antecedents of this went back to the early summits between President Nixon and Communist Party General Secretary Brezhnev. It may have been, I believe, the 1972 summit which actually produced the agreement for the exchange of sites. There was controversy surrounding this from the very beginning because the US gave to the

Soviet Union the Mount Alto site in Washington, DC, which as you know, Stu, is one of the relatively few high ground areas in Washington.

Q: For someone who doesn't know, its just below the National Cathedral on Wisconsin Boulevard. It's up high, and you'll explain why that's important.

MATTHEWS: The site for the new American embassy in Moscow was prime real estate. There was no question of that, but it was lower in elevation by some considerable degree than the Soviet site. This led to subsequent criticisms of the stupidity of the deal. And I have an anecdote in that regard. This has to do with electronic intelligence gathering which it is said was conducted by the Soviet Union in its installations, and it is alleged that US embassies engaged in this as well.

Q: At line of site of course, the higher up you are, the more you can beam at things.

MATTHEWS: And that had a lot to do with the technology of the 1960s-"70s. In more recent times as technology has become ever more sophisticated, these concerns are somewhat diminished. But at the time it was red hot. So you might say in that sense the situation, the clock started ticking way back when the ink went on that agreement before ever a spade of earth was turned in either Moscow, or Washington.

At some point in the "70s the Soviet construction organization, a totally Soviet government controlled and operated organization began to clear the site in Moscow. As I say, it was just down from where our present embassy is located. It was, and is, a large site, it was some ten to twelve acres as I recall. Much of it by the way consists of town house type units, plus a huge cafeteria, gym, storage rooms, etc., and at the very head of all of that is this massive ten-story chancery building, extremely massive in terms of size, heaviness of construction materials, etc. So Soviet workmen, including to be sure full time members of the KGB, would have been involved in the clearing and excavation of the site itself as time went on, and the actual construction began...of course, you put in your footings, bearing foundation, etc. That was all done by Soviet workmen, and indeed after the

fact, investigations revealed that there was only very sporadic US counter intelligence surveillance of the site at any given time. Not that in the event that counted for very much because the thing that really caused the problem was that at some point in the construction process, there was a need, because the structure is so massive, to precast major concrete beams, members, spandrels...I became quite knowledgeable by the way on the whole range of construction issues. Those were all done off-site at the one, or several, places around Moscow where the Soviet construction firm did such things. They basically did it and brought those huge members, trucked them over and little by little up went the structure. Suffice to say with literally no supervision as far as I am aware of the precasting process of those major members, beam spandrels, any and everything could and no doubt was inserted into them. By that time the Soviet government, in effect said, here we've completed the construction contract according to the specs as laid out. I can't remember the exact sequence, I know always in terms of new construction projects in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, we would have the governments prepare the structure up to a point, and then we would say that thereafter we will take care of handling those things that we wish to construct on our own, using our own American cleared workmen, often Seabees, and others. But the timing on everything came sensationally to light in what you might call from the standpoint of a major scandal, the most sensation timing vis-a-vis the Marine security guard scandal. And that's why the avalanches and abuse were being heaped on the State Department, and if you will on the US government more generally because of the terrible security lapses that led to these situations, they all came together at once. So they were major problems. And in the wondrous ways of the State Department bureaucracy, not to mention the many other organizations in Washington which had a role, and sometimes a significant role in these projects, there was no one entity that other agencies felt comfortable with in trying to pull it together, determine priorities, do the footwork up on Capitol Hill, oversee the implementation, or after action reports is perhaps the better term of these studies that I mentioned earlier.

Well, I had no illusions whatsoever when I got off the phone with George Vest. This was a barrel of worms even before I knew all of the gory details. Even what I knew already from reading the wireless file while I was sitting in my sunny little office in Malta was enough to tell me that this was a mess. But hey, may you live in interesting times and I was coming up on my two years, so I said, what the heck. I came back to take this on.

What can I say? It was an extremely hectic, frenetic, even ugly year, twelve months or so in terms of all the things that I was trying to do. The Department tried to be helpful to me, certainly in terms of letting me chose an able staff, and giving me the space, and the resources, and the funds that I needed to crank up this extraordinary effort. As I look back on it, and I have reflected on this many times, I believe we came out about where I thought we should come out after some months of my initial labor. There had been a number of schemes, and here I'm talking just about what to do with the building problems.

Q: Before you get to that, could you tell what the Sergeant Lonetree thing was too? Because both these come together.

MATTHEWS: The Sergeant Lonetree, corporal Lonetree, whatever he was, thing was in fact his confessing. He had finished his assignment as a Marine security guard in Moscow and I think he transferred to Vienna to the detachment there. But through whatever means that it came to light, I simply cannot recall now, there were allegations that the KGB, the secret police, had been given entry into classified areas of the American embassy in Moscow, to wit, the communications center and such places. Obviously security people from various organizations descended upon Sergeant Lonetree, and a number of other Marines who were stationed in Moscow at the time, and months and months later it's my recollection that it was concluded that in fact neither Sergeant Lonetree nor anyone else had opened the doors of the embassy in the dead of night to let KGB folks roam throughout these classified areas. Although during the course of my very intense year with those responsibilities, that was the operating assumption that this could have happened, and that therefore we would act as if it had happened, not without reason taking a worse

case scenario in that regard. So there were lots of problems. Needless to say, I was not a sole actor, nor did I have the kind of authority to go with the kind of responsibility that would have been needed to create solutions. That this and this will be done, to take care of the problem. As in typical State Department, and indeed a typical Washington fashion, I was given that post ambiguously. All titles of “tsar” which I've seen given to people many times, are always with the same result. The title of coordinator really means that everyone feels free to do in-runs, and use you for carom shots where it serves their purpose. But since I was somewhat a veteran of such 7th floor politics, and other such things around Washington, it probably bothered me less than it would have someone who was less knowledgeable about all of that.

Secretary of State Shultz strongly supported my operation, along with John Whitehead who was the deputy Secretary of State. As a matter of fact, I won't say the crisis ever cooled, but it at least didn't become the number one compelling thing for the Secretary of State every day. Whitehead was the one to whom I would normally report, although I would give Secretary Shultz an update every few weeks as well. But I was working very closely with the assistant secretary in charge of diplomatic security, of European affairs, the foreign buildings operation, FBO, and all manner of other folks in the Administrative.

Soon after I got back to Washington, and of course my attention was totally compelled by the problems of just Moscow, at some point we began at least to sort out a few priorities. Even though there was immense work to be done, I remember a meeting with Secretary Shultz where he said, I know that our posts in Eastern Europe have bad operating problems also. We hoped nothing like the Moscow thing. So in a sort of offhand way, my responsibilities, at least from Secretary Shultz, were expanded considerably to include our East European posts. In fact, it would have been beyond the ability of any human being, let alone one with a staff as small as I had, 5, 6, 7 people to try to handle everything for all these posts. But I like to think we did some good in terms of setting up coordinating mechanisms which by and large got them more attention.

Q: In a way there are two approaches of this thing. One is to find out who is at fault, and hang somebody out to dry. And the other one is, what are you going to do about it?

MATTHEWS: When I got back I said to the Secretary of State, and to everyone else, I said, I'm well aware that there all kinds of people here who want someone to hang. I'm not naive, I realized that that's the way it is. And had I been naive, I would not have remained naive long because many members of Congress were delighted to have me come up so they could punch on me, and tell me just how much someone needed to hang for this. But, without any doubt in my mind then or now, my job was to try to do something about the problem, not to sit there and say, oh, this is terrible. I'm all for responsibility and people taking responsibility for their actions, but I saw most of my effort as geared to do something about it, and that's where I in fact directed the staff effort.

The first time consuming thing was to follow through with Secretary Schlesinger, Jim Schlesinger, the results of his study. He came up with a study, and he used some very good intelligence analysts, and construction experts in the security field, to help him with his study. He came out with the recommendation that rather than demolish the present structure entirely, or chop half of it off, or three-quarters of it off, that you in effect construct an adjoining structure which would be constructed entirely with American cleared labor, etc. That would be the area that the ambassador and all other classified operations took place in. And, of course, there was and is immense respect in town for Jim Schlesinger. In presenting testimony before a Congressional committee, I accompanied him along with others needless to say, but I was always introduced as the person who was going to follow through and make sure these problems are taken care of, by God! Jim Schlesinger, of course, was always asked, as indeed I was, how could something like this have happened? How? And early on he quoted Napoleon, if I'm not wrong, as having said of some such terrible scandal situation back during the Napoleonic era, that there are limits to rascality, but there are no limits to stupidity. So I found this actually not a bad line to use myself subsequently. Oh, goodness sakes, there was finger pointing everywhere,

and every which way between individuals, between government departments, between branches of government. But little by little, not that I had a heck of a lot of time, I set up a structure. We commissioned a very focused engineering study of options of what we could do to the existing building. This was without prejudice I hasten to add to Secretary Schlesinger's recommendation about the separate structure. But as I recall, several mover-shaker committee chairmen on Capitol Hill said look again at what we can do to the present structure. So we commissioned a very, very detailed study. I believe it was by BDM, a major Washington area contractor who has a lot of government contracts. And they came up with several options. They looked at tearing down the structure entirely, this massive ten-story building, and excavating to sever any and all cables, and then partial deconstruction. A new word appeared in our lexicon, deconstruction, we used it all the time. And in the event we made recommendations to Congressional committees, to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, just about everyone who had any stick in this at all. And over the course of some months I managed to forge an inter-agency consensus on presenting to the Congress a recommendation that we go for something that came to be known Top Hat, which was to deconstruct the top several floors of the embassy structure, and then rebuild using state-of-the-art, state of technology methods and procedures, our own secure area. This ran into predictable opposition from those, especially in Congress...well, almost entirely in Congress, who wanted the building totally torn down, and excavated. We ran into opposition from them, and on one committee side, a very powerful committee chairman, we ran into opposition because he didn't think that we really needed to do much of anything. He didn't see why you couldn't just use the building and watch what you say, he finally characterized it that way. So there ensued an impasse which went on for several years, well past my retirement. And only in recent years, say in the last two or three years, did they finally come around, after all the passions had pretty much cooled in terms of political feelings about it...I don't mean cooling of the sense that something good needed to be done to solve the problems, they came back to the recommendation that essentially you go with Top Hat, you lop off the top floors, and rebuild.

I might add in all this, that it was extremely complicated, a complex matrix because throughout this whole period, even going well back before the scandals broke, the US side had insistently, and properly so, said that the Soviet Union could not use its new chancery site, which it had already constructed, that building was already in place on Mount Alto...

Q: With its own workers?

MATTHEWS: Partially with its own workers, but they would use American workers for some things, but they were very closely supervised. The Soviet embassy people would, of course, use American contractors for certain things, major casting, etc., the concrete trucks would come in from wherever firm, but the Soviet embassy counterintelligence security people were always very much on top of this. In other words, they were doing it the way it should have been done on the other side, you might say, by our people in Moscow. I don't know how long construction had been finished, and handsomely so I might say on the new Soviet chancery on Mount Alto. Now, most of our construction on the ten-twelve acre site in Moscow was residential, and commissary, gym, storage, etc., about which there was no controversy. You assumed that obviously they had put listening devices in that too. Similarly, the Mount Alto site contains many, many residential units. So at some point, because we had terrible space problems in Moscow, we had cut the deal that the Soviet embassy people could move into their residential units at Mount Alto, and we correspondingly moved into our residential units at that new site in Moscow. But the chanceries remained unoccupied.

So coming back to more recent times, sometime in the last two or three years, '93, '94, '95, the Russian government now, I think this is the end of the Soviet Union, in effect cut a deal that said, you, the American government can have the entire property, which is a large expanse of property which lies between the present old American embassy in Moscow, and the new ten acre site, and do with it as you wish. We said, okay in view of this we will now let you move in to your new chancery building. We, of course, are not going to move into the chancery building in Moscow because only now would they be even getting

underway with the major reconstruction of that building, which will cost tens of millions of dollars.

Q: While this was going on, what was the reaction of the Soviets? I mean, during the time you were involved. Did they play any part?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes. They were somewhat between bemused, and amused. Chortling is actually a very good description. The reason I had some insights into this is, I made some incredible like ten or eleven trips to Moscow in a nine month period, which is definitely more travel than one would care to have. And most of those trips to Moscow involved meetings with Soviet officials about what we were insisting on, etc. I mean, there was certainly never any question of their being arrogant or critical because we had essentially caught them with their hands in the cookie jar. We, however, of course were the ones responsible for making it so easy for them to put their hands in the cookie jar all the time. In effect, the exchanges with the Soviet officials came down to do whatever you feel you need to do. We delivered our part of the bargain, we constructed the embassy according to the specs, gave it to you and you say there's some problem with devices. We don't know anything about that. Obviously they weren't fessing up to...

Q: You're a child of the Eastern European Bureau, and yet you were coordinating and trying to do something, but there couldn't help but be as you got into it sort of blame going around. What was your impression of how EUR/SOV or whatever it was called in those days, responded to this thing?

MATTHEWS: These were my friends and I'd known them for years, of course. But they were very tender about the issue of being by-passed or having blame attached to them, and goodness knows the people then in charge of the Bureau, or of Soviet affairs, the office within the Bureau, had had no role in the decisions and in the actions which led to these unfortunate events. There was never any question of that. I found, as is almost always the case, that although the various bureaus in the State Department said sure,

they thought it was a good thing to have a coordinator appointed to coordinate these issues... that when it came down to those things that inevitably I had to do which involved my impinging on their turf, they did not like that. I expected that. This is hardly worth mentioning. A lot of my long, long days and nights was spent in bureaucratic engagement to pull parties together to do this, to do that, to not do this, not do that, toward what I hoped was the common good. And I'd say that in all of this, needless to say there were a number of agencies involved and I spent a lot of effort coordinating with them, and I got generally quite good cooperation. If I had to characterize it looking back, I would say I got more cooperation and support in the initial blush to much of what I was doing from other agencies, including the intelligence agencies, than I often did from the respective bureaus in the State Department which were involved in this. That, of course, doesn't surprise me since that's the way the State Department has operated for a long time in terms of the fiefdoms, if you will, that prevail. I might add that in all this, I think I noted earlier, that I worked directly under the Secretary of State, George Shultz, and then some months after I got into the job, most of my at least weekly direction, came from John Whitehead, the deputy Secretary. But I was actually part of the immediate staff of the Under Secretary for Management, Ron Spiers. As I think I also noted, everyone gave me great support. I, of course, had a lot to do with the Director General's office, personnel, and others as we looked into what we could do to handle the very immediate concerns of giving our people some support and help out there at embassy Moscow, and looking a bit ahead as to whether we might want to follow that model, or something close to it elsewhere in Eastern Europe. But since the primary immediate crisis was embassy Moscow, and consulate general Leningrad, my old post, that was where we concentrated our efforts. I certainly was not the one responsible for the idea, but someone came up with the idea, which I did help implement, to go to...do you know the major engineering contractor, PA&E? They were in Vietnam.

Q: Oh yes, the Pacific Architects and Engineers, Morris & Newson were the two big ones in Vietnam.

MATTHEWS: That's right, and I remember the PA&E folks from Vietnam, they did our road graders, in fact, they were brave enough, they would actually go there and plow where we thought there were mines, and bang them off for us. A bit above and beyond..., but I digress. Suffice to say that PA&E bid on it and won a major contract to provide support people, drivers, plumbers, carpenters, electricians, you name it, to embassy Moscow. These were Americans and of course you can imagine the bumps and grinds and problems that ensued in the first part of this, but little by little over quite some months, the good people among them, including some remarkably good young people who had come out of American universities with degrees in Russian, who I guess had some affinity for sawing boards and doing plumbing tasks. They would show up on the contracts, be retained, others who were critically unsuited, God only knows what they thought they were getting into, they would be removed. So that was sort of our bridge which worked at least as a vital Band Aid which worked until such time as, and I forget what year it was, it was some years later...well, of course, I had retired, that the two sides, the Soviet and American sides, quietly came to an agreement that there would be selective return of national employees, with appropriate safeguards. But that added a tumultuous note because it was a time that you were trying to deal with all of these other horrible things. I mean, you had dust, dirt, crud, all over embassy Moscow which until you got somebody there to wield mops...the ambassador at the time, Jack Matlock, he and embassy counselors would put in their turn as bucket brigades, swabbing down the steps of the embassy.

Q: I've heard two things, sort of in the corridors, and I didn't follow this very closely, one was the accusation that Nixon and Kissinger were in such a hurry to get some sort of an agreement going, that they sort of brushed aside security concerns when this first happened. And the other was, since it happened on Arthur Hartman's watch, particularly the Lonetree thing that he didn't do enough. Did you get involved in either of these?

MATTHEWS: I'm very aware of both, and my very firm view based on having had quite a bit to do with the issues, is that when it comes to the first, if that is correct, that political considerations rode roughshod over the terms which could and should have been made much tighter, much better, and I believe it to be the case that my dear friend, and boss on several occasions, Walter Stoessel, was the assistant secretary for European Affairs during the 1972 summit, and in particular, went to the Secretary of State and said that he did not believe that the agreement should be signed. And my understanding, based on the things to which I am privy, is that he was instructed over his protest, to sign the agreement.

Q: The Secretary at that time would have been...was it Henry Kissinger at that time?

MATTHEWS: I believe that to be the case. With regard to the second, Ambassador Hartman, and his very fine staff, I really believe that to be unfounded. Arthur Hartman and the others had all been capably managing, running, embassy Moscow. They were simply the ones there when it all broke. Certainly, when it comes to the “discovery” of the bugged new embassy building, that had been going on for years. As far as the Marine security guard thing, these kinds of problems could have happened at other posts. Obviously in the wake of this, there was a lot of pulling up of socks and what have you, etc., as there always is after a flap. But in my own view, and I have thought about this a lot, I really wouldn't consider that Ambassador Hartman and his staff deserve any blame for something that could have happened anywhere.

Q: Well, out of this episode, you obviously already had had experience, but this is when your feet were put to the blow torch, what was your impression of the role of Congress in this? What did you come away with?

MATTHEWS: Oh, Congress was interested in scapegoating, Congress was interested in being seen politically to be, by God, doing something about these building and administrative things which they normally wouldn't have cared a fig for. In general, even though there were some people in Congress who were supportive and helpful, I mean

who wanted to be supportive and helpful, many of them were posturing. Most of them were posturing. That particularly was the case with respect to virtually all of the key committee chairmen who were involved. There were a couple of exceptions to that. But that was clearly the case. For years before that, and God knows for years since that, the State Department has often had poor relationships with members of Congress, and with Congress as an institution. And clearly a lot of the hostility and downright meanness that I observed and encountered while I was doing this job was part of that larger neuralgia.

Q: So, why don't we stop at this point, and we'll pick this up after you left this coordinating job. Unless there is anything else you want to add, we can put it on here, and you can talk about it the next time. Is there anything else we should talk about do you think?

MATTHEWS: That's probably about it. About all that's left to talk about is my retirement. I did like someone once advised us to do in Vietnam, I declared victory and left.

Q: If there is anything you see that see that you want to add or embellish later you can.

End of interview